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THE AMERICAN ENTERPRISE

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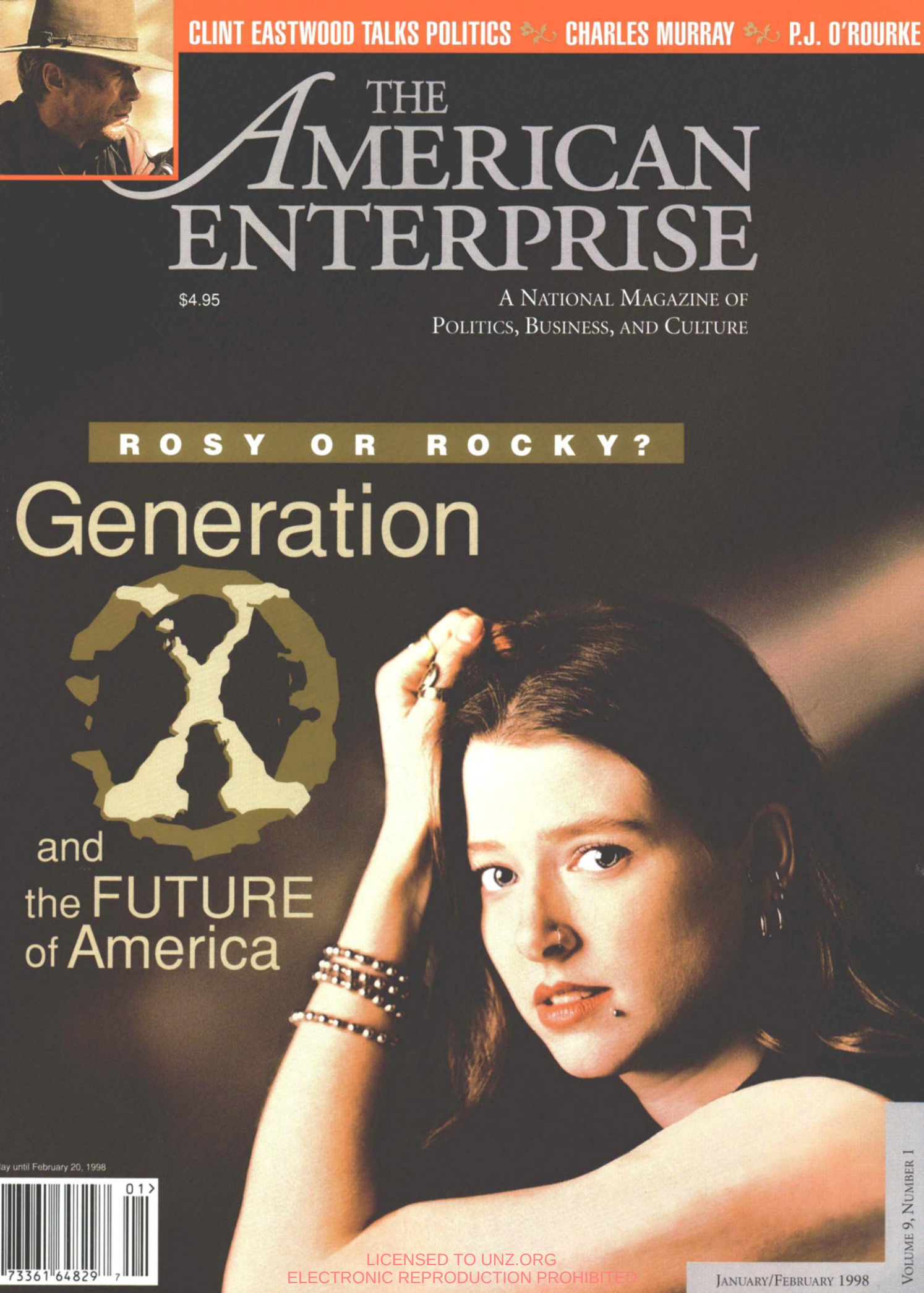
A National Magazine of Politics, Business, and Culture

ROSY OR ROCKY?

Generation X and the FUTURE of America



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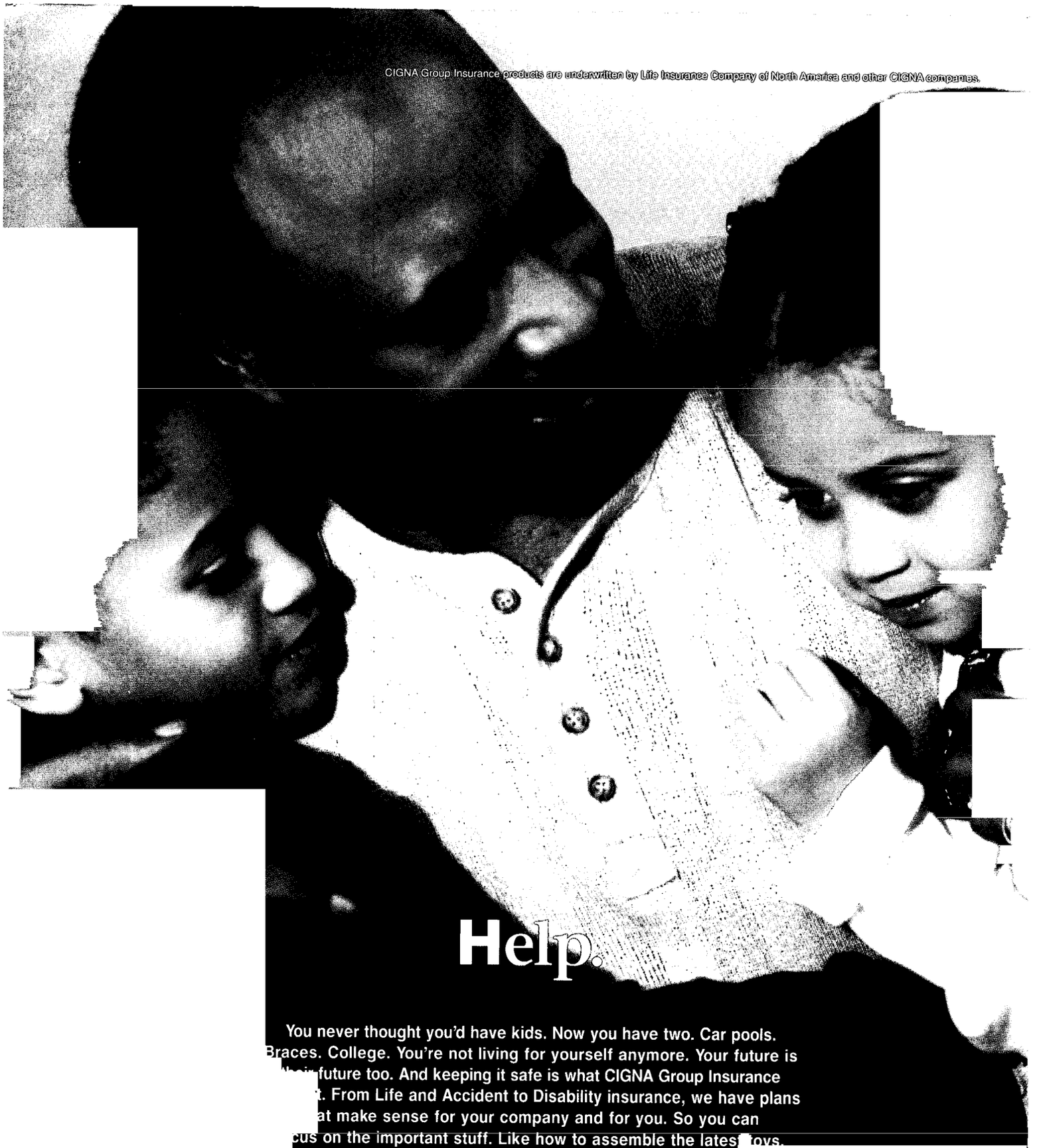

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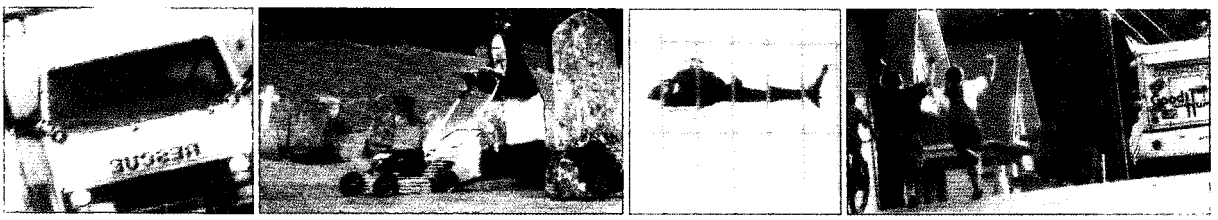

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THE AMERICAN ENTERPRISE

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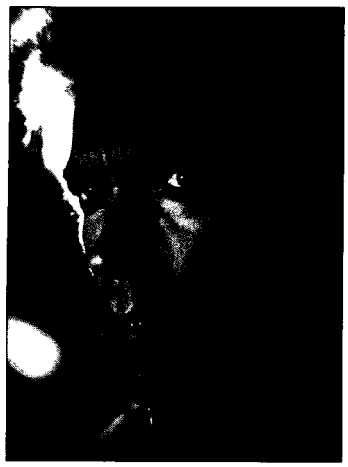

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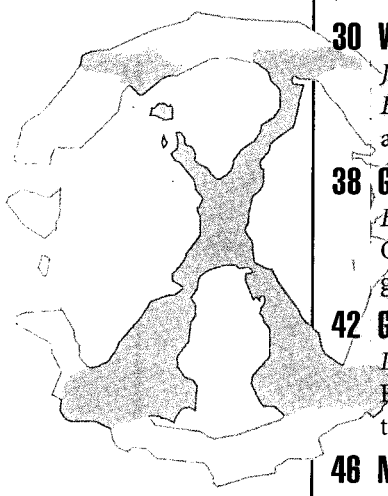

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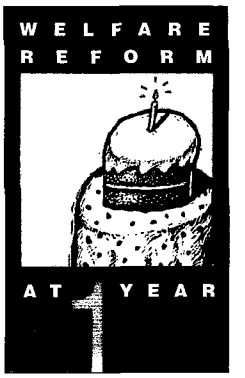

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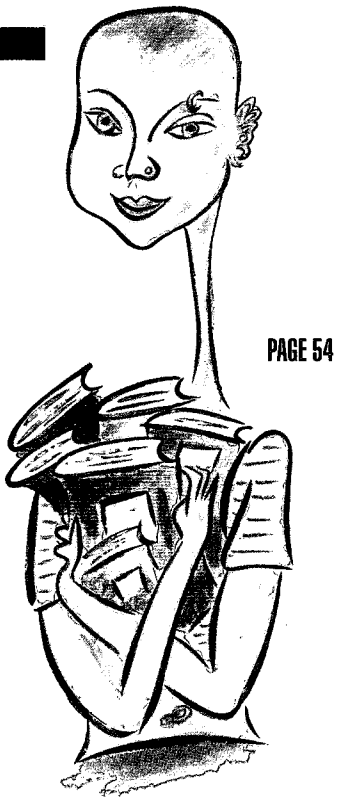

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Bird's Eye

KARL ZINSMEISTER

The Humble Generation

Generation Xers—the young Americans born between 1965 and 1983—get miserable press. Am I the only one who finds this unfair? A "cynical, purple-haired blob watching TV," snaps *Advertising Age* (whose writers certainly ought to know about such things). "They're soft," snips Michael Kinsley (who, like most draft-dodging baby boomers, wouldn't know hard even if he'd been assigned to read about it in graduate school). "Crybabies" sneers the *Washington Post* (where tear-stained blouses and neckties are part of the corporate dress code).

Others have tarred Gen Xers as lazy (the "slackers" stereotype). Or greedy materialists. Conservatives worry they are amoral; liberals accuse them of lacking ideals.

And these depictions seem to be soaking into the national cranium: Only 37 percent of Americans polled this year said today's young will "help make this country a better place." Even Gen Xers themselves seem to be buying this dark view. Just 21 percent of 18- to 29-year-olds rate their future as "very good" in the latest Roper poll.

The critics who are most put off by the Gen Xers are baby-boom liberals. The fact that Xers show so little interest in burning down college buildings seems to annoy these people. In fact, James Kunen (whose "dear diary" manifesto *The Strawberry Statement* made him a giant among the bearded set during the 1960s) admitted in *Time* recently that many boomers such as he are finding they don't *like* the Xer children they've raised. And it isn't just because so many of the kids want to go to business school. Even more offputting to many liberal boomers than the ways their children differ from them are the ways they *resemble* them—in ugly starkness. You see, the wages of liberal boomer ideas, for many of these children, have turned out to be wounds. Listen to Kunen—

> So this is how their generation rebels: they dump their parents' avowed political beliefs but pick up their parents' social-sexual mores and run with them. They smoke, drink, take drugs, and have sex—earlier than we ever dreamed of doing.

"Our children turned out like us after all. But we are not who we thought we'd be," Kunen writes. "Our own happiness," he sighs, proved to be the only lasting boomer cause. "This is the example our children have grown up with."

As Kunen suggests, there are good reasons to worry about Generation X. Everyone has his own list. A late-November article in the *Wall Street Journal* reported that some Gen Xers are having trouble taking responsibility for their financial borrowing. Credit card delinquencies and bankruptcy declarations are rising faster among Americans in their twenties and early thirties than any other group.

Conservatives have their own concerns. Writer Charlotte Allen, a decidedly non-liberal baby boomer, notes that Xers are the first generation to be raised "*within* the cult of self-fulfillment rather than being converted to it." "They are a 'Me Generation' upon a 'Me Generation,'" she warns.

"Almost all of the cultural references for these kids are to MTV-type things," one conservative college instructor tells me. "There is very much a 'Beavis and Butthead' view of reality. There is a coarsening, a cynicism I notice in a lot of my Generation X

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WHATEVER ELSE MAY BE SAID ABOUT GENERATION X, ONE FACT IS CLEAR: THEY ARE THE MOST BADLY PARENTED AMERICANS EVER.

students." Another professor says "I've been teaching college students for 20 years exactly, and over that period of time I have seen a marked decline in the verbal abilities of students. A marked decline in the ability to follow complex readings, and an even more marked decline in the disposition to discuss complex intellectual matters. Students today are inclined to take in things in class and then immediately go back to this high school mode of communication, in semi-literate half-sentences."

I recently met with a veteran school teacher with decades of experience in the classroom. She mentioned in an off-hand way that when she was younger she always had to spend time at the end of each afternoon reorganizing the classroom book collection, because they would be heavily riffled through during the school day. But in recent years, she has rarely had to do any straightening—because students simply don't pick books up. "Instead they just talk, or go to the computer, during their free-time."

The Chronicle of Higher Education printed an article this summer by a woman who has since 1970 taught a short story in her college classes with a surprise ending revealing that the villagers being described are engaged in human sacrifice. She recounts how generations of her students have been stunned by the unexpected narrative twist. And then she explains how, recently, students started growing blasé toward the story climax where family members and neighbors kill one of their own. Finally one student—a "woman who wrote passionately of saving the whales, rainforests, and a stray dog"—refused (on multicultural grounds) to disapprove of human sacrifice in principle, and then "no one in the whole class of more than 20 ostensibly intelligent individuals would go out on a limb and take a stand against human sacrifice." The instructor's recounting was titled: Students Who Won't Decry Evil—A Case of Too Much Tolerance?

Whatever else is said about Generation X, one fact is clear: They are the most badly parented cohort of Americans ever. Gen Xers are the test-dummy generation for mass divorce, widespread childbearing out of wedlock, institutional day care, and myriad misguided educational fads. They grew up with contraceptives, drugs, weapons, and "feelings" in their schools, not prayers and facts. The streets they wandered as children were far less safe than previous generations enjoyed. Worst of all, many of their parents were too self-absorbed and busy chasing their own rainbows to be properly attentive mothers and fathers. As cultural observer Roger Rosenblatt put it recently, "for the past 30 years older people have left children high and dry."

Among the most decent baby boomers this is now a source of guilt and profound regret. In a commencement address to graduates of the University of Virginia not long ago, *Washington Post* columnist William Raspberry began with an apology. He wanted to apologize, he said, "for my generation's failure to instill in you the values that our parents instilled in us. In our rush to give you the material goods we never had, we forgot to give you the values we did possess."

Mr. Raspberry makes this case with his usual gentleness. Less tender observers point out that it isn't just what the baby boomers *forgot* to pass on that hurt their children. In many areas, damage has been done by foolishness that boomers actively fomented and injected into their children and the wider culture. Our drug and crime explosions didn't occur just because no one was guarding the store—they sprang directly from pernicious demands for individual liberation. It wasn't inattention that brought jars of mint-flavored condoms into public schools, but rather an idiotic and quite intentional effort to tear down society's behavioral constraints. After reflecting on the baby boomer legacy to Generation X, Ed Ericson (whose real fondness for Gen Xers is on display in his feature article on page 38) counsels: "If ever I could approve of a generation gap, it is now. Xers, stay away from the boomer model!"

Alas, the harm from bad boomer parenting has already been done in many areas. Studies like those by Judith Wallerstein document the enormous swath of pain inflicted on successor generations by the boomer taste for divorce. Other children have lost something that can't be replaced, by dint of *never* knowing a father. Nor is there any taking back the personality damage done to children abandoned as infants and toddlers by maniacally careerist parents out to break various and sundry glass ceilings, even if the blow had to be struck with the bones of their own children.

You'll see some of the effects of these family betrayals on Gen Xers in several striking articles in our features section. Very likely, you've had glimpses of some of these bruises yourself. I know I have. A few years ago, for instance, I worked with a writer just out of a good college. As we discussed campus life and her experiences, I started hearing lots of references to eating disorders, friends in therapy, astonishing promiscuity, and other hurts. Then one day we were talking about her future and she started despairing of ever finding a good man for a husband. "What are you talking about?" I laughed. "You're young, attractive, smart. You'll be fine." But she was deadly serious. "I've already warned my parents I may have to go to a sperm bank and have children by myself." I was flabbergasted to hear this from a very pretty and talented 21-year-old woman with the whole world before her. Only a soul bearing some deep puncture would seriously mull such a course at that time in life.

Over the last year I've made a special effort to talk to Gen Xers and to question people who spend a lot of time with them, and I've learned that their ranks include a significant number of confused and wounded parties like my friend. The articles later in this magazine by Kristi Keil, Barbara Whitehead, Arthur Levine and Jeanette Cureton portray some of the hidden disturbances that swirl among today's young adults. But the short article by Bill Mattox, the items in our SCAN section by Evan Gahr and Kathleen Howley, and other evidence scattered throughout this issue also

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HARD MEASURES OF BEHAVIOR SUGGEST MANY GEN XERS MAY BE HEALTHIER THAN MEDIA GRUMPS GIVE THEM CREDIT FOR.

make it clear that there have been healthy counter-reactions against the social decay Gen Xers encountered growing up.

Mind you, the symptoms of bad parenting among Gen Xers don't always show up as negative. Sometimes the surface effect can be quite the opposite. For instance, Gen Xers show a real ferocity for business and professional success (as we have documented and admired in this magazine in the past; see Rich Miniter's article in July/August 1997). This stems substantially from the grit, self-reliance, and anti-bureaucratic tastes one finds among many members of this generation. But there is also one other factor involved, I'm sure: Among children who have lacked stable and attentive parental care while growing up, one of the classic responses is to become occupationally driven. Finding themselves with unsatisfied cravings for emotional security, these individuals seek the compensations of economic security. Children of divorce or abandonment (at least the ones who avoid being crushed in the process) often end up determined to write their own tickets in adulthood, and to avoid being dependent upon others—traits that connect easily with business ownership (and workaholism). Such people are far from crippled; they are often, in fact, super-producers in the workplace. But they may not be especially happy—or so successful outside the office.

The real break with previous patterns of family and social life came not with Generation X but with their parents. Generation X has actually produced fairly stable lines on the big measures of personal behavior and cultural health. The sharp, ripping discontinuities in those trendlines came earlier, via the baby boomers. Generation X is just where we see the *after effects* of the 1960s-1970s decisions to throw away everything previously known about sex, schooling, work, religion, family making, and so forth. For an extreme case in point, consider that most famous of Gen X couples: Courtney Love, rock singer and actress (*The People vs. Larry Flynt*), and her husband Kurt Cobain, the prominent "grunge rocker" who killed himself three years ago.

Having recently fought my way through Gen X author Poppy Brite's new biography of Love (which is based on interviews and the singer's own private journals and institutional records), I can attest that the life of this particular Gen X icon is an almost pure and predictable extension of the '60s radical experiment carried to its logical '90s conclusion. If you're looking for the most troubling shadows on Generation X, just look for the intellectual (and biological) offshoots of the boomer experiments in "freedom." Like this poor woman.

"Courtney Love" is not a phony stage name but an actual hippie name given by her parents—a Grateful Dead groupie named Hank Harrison and Linda Carroll, a young heiress to the Bausch optical fortune who went countercultural in 1960s San Francisco. The hippie household that became Baby Love's home provided little order and many hazards. Courtney's father, a compulsive doper, fed her LSD when she was four. Other men came and went through her mother's life, and by the time she was eight Courtney had had three legal surnames and was living in a tepee near Eugene, Oregon, on a commune that opposed gender stereotyping and other oppressions.

By her teenage years, Courtney was doing badly in school, consuming all manner of drugs, tramping sexually, and slicing on her wrists with Wilkinson razor blades. She ended up in juvenile homes and foster care, and eventually ran away to become an underaged stripper.

After a series of abusive relationships with rock musicians to whom she played groupie, Love eventually married Cobain—whose life had been sent into a sharp downward spiral when his parents divorced while he was eight. "It destroyed him," admits mother Wendy Cobain. "He changed completely. I think he was ashamed. And he became very inward—he just held everything. He became very shy."

Cobain and Love became obsessive heroin users and a desperately unhappy couple even as they rocketed to pop music stardom and huge popularity among fellow twentysomethings. Early in 1994, Cobain unsuccessfully attempted suicide with tranquilizers, with a note in his pocket reading, "I'd rather die than go through a divorce." Later that year, he carried out his deathwish successfully with a shotgun, and so became one of the most celebrated casualties among America's first generation to be raised by moral relativists.

In spite of the poor parenting many Gen Xers have suffered, in spite of the ways they have been let down by vital social institutions like the public schools, I actually find myself feeling reasonably hopeful about their prospects as a group. As those of you who read INDICATORS know, I am a close watcher of social statistics; by carefully observing the little blips and turning points of national life as measured in hard numbers, you will often get a sense of fresh realities before they begin to show up in journalism or the popular consciousness. And for more than a year now, I have been coming across evidence that many Gen Xers may be healthier than the media grumps are giving them credit for.

Some of these indicators—touching on religious attitudes, spending patterns, business activity, and political views—you will find in Ed Ericson's feature article. Other hints of sanity pop up in many places. For instance, survey research conducted earlier this year showed that many of today's teenagers would welcome clearer rules and limits on personal behavior: 50 percent supported nighttime curfews for teens; 58 percent said school officials should have the right to search student lockers; 87 percent say there should be limits on where teens can go on the Internet; 43 percent say public schools should lead students in prayer; 69 percent say students should be required to stand for the national anthem.

One place where Gen Xers seem particularly solid is the work ethic. Despite the slacker image, rates of employment

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THE BIG TEST FOR GEN XERS—AND THE ULTIMATE LIMIT ON THEIR SUCCESS—WILL BE HOW THEY WORK OUT QUESTIONS OF SEX AND FAMILY LIFE.

among young adults are now very high, and there is lots of evidence that most apply themselves diligently. The Roper Center finds that 87 percent of Gen Xers have a "strong sense" of company loyalty, that 87 percent are satisfied with the demands of their current jobs, and that 69 percent accept that "people get ahead by their own hard work." Interestingly, they scored higher on all three of those measures than baby boomers.

By chance, we at *TAE* happened to be interviewing lots of Gen X job applicants over the last two months—because we needed to replace our ace assistant editor, Tom Switzer, who is returning to Australia. Obviously ours was not a representative cross-sample of the whole generation, but from *any* employer's point of view the young adults we looked over were enormously impressive: diligent, enterprising, hard-studying, technologically savvy, varied in talent and experience, high-aspiring, flexible, and willing to pay their dues. On the basis of my own workplace experiences plus my regular contacts with students on campuses across the country, you can't convince me that most Gen Xers are deadbeats or selfish slugs. In fact, the individuals setting the standards for the rest of the cohort appear to be the most creative and talented kids ever to enter the U.S. labor force.

It's not so much in talent as in discipline and responsibility where this generation will need to prove itself. Overall, the early indications are that Gen Xers are on their way to becoming about as solid a group of citizens as any other Americans of this century. And in a few important areas they are actually overturning some of the worst excesses of their parents and older siblings, the boomers. (Their rates of drug use, for instance, are lower.)

The big test for Gen Xers—and the ultimate limit on their personal fortunes—will be how they work out questions of sex and family life. Lacking guidance from their elders, and with most of the old rules smashed up, Gen Xers are currently stumbling around like crazy when it comes to relations between the sexes and family formation. If the generation has an Achilles Heel, this is it.

But somehow, amidst a good many disrupted childhoods, and despite the unsettledness in present behavior, many Gen Xers have managed to form rather traditional *ideals* in this area. According to Roper, 86 percent of Xers now define a happy marriage as an important part of the good life (up 14 percentage points from 1991, and higher than some older age groups). A recent Pew Foundation study found Xers more disapproving than baby boomers of "single women having kids." A survey in the awful 1997 "Sex" issue of *Details* magazine showed that even today's most sexually anarchic kids generally say they want, and expect to have some day, a traditional marriage and family. Though many of them have no clear sense (or family model) of how to attain it, the yearning for family loyalty and stability and true love is quite palpable within this generation. It may even be exaggerated among those who suffered lousy home lives as children.

"This is a generation that's very critical of baby boomer sexual ethics. They feel their parents did not do right," argues author Maggie Gallagher. She cites the writing of Xer author Katie Roiphe as illustrating libertine behavior that is nonetheless "suffused with longing for a sex code that tells you how to behave and what it means." Gallagher warns, though, that while many Xers have white-picket-fence dreams and a real openness to the aspirations of '50s morality, "the family literature suggests that their desire to create more stable households than they grew up with will be hard to translate into reality." This is why one sees so much anxiety about marriage and childbearing among twentysomethings today.

If sex and family life are likely to be Generation X's great test, their great strength would seem to be their lack of hubris. Whatever else they are, Gen Xers tend, as a group, to be strikingly humble and willing to learn. It has been said that the greatest wisdom of all is that which knows its own ignorance—and Xers will be well served in the long run by their general lack of cocksureness. This also sets them sharply apart from the truth-bearing, platitude-slinging, world-saving baby boomers whom they follow. That generation (my generation) could be told nothing.

Nearly everyone who works with them says average Gen Xers tend to be comparatively sweet, earnest, and cautious. They have so far proved resilient. And they are open to competing views, including advice on how to establish a stable, decent, faithful, tradition-delimited life. At the very least it doesn't seem silly to most Xers that one might desire such outcomes (as it did to some boomers)—perhaps because many Xers grew up craving these things, in homes where they were in short supply. While they may not have so much in the way of virtue in their breasts at present, Xers are at least not opposed to virtue, or the idea of having someone else introduce them to it. This may be the key to their redeemability.

The Gen X vices are mostly animal vices—thoroughly outgrowable—and not the more dangerous philosophical vices that have plagued boomers. God willing, the family and sexual scars borne by so many Xers can heal. And if they do, there will be many good things ahead for this group.

In the end, predicting the fate of Generation X, and comparing them to the boomers, becomes almost a Christian argument over which quality is more advantageous in the living of life: Confidence? Or humility? The view in the Good Book is that what ultimately matters is not so much whether you've got problems and flaws, as whether you recognize your failures and aspire to overcome them. That's the task ahead for Generation X—and all Americans who would help them translate their refreshing openness to improvement into life successes.

Which seems to me a rather hopeful place to leave the fate of the 71 million young souls who make up America's next leadership class.

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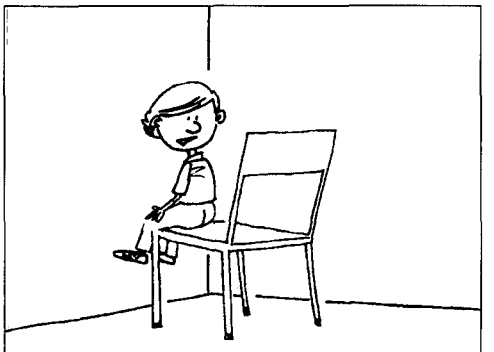
Sidelights

Federal tax law is now so complicated that even the CPAs' trade group wants it simplified. ❧ "Free health care would be nice," says one wag, "but from the looks of public housing, I'm just not interested." ❧ A Georgetown student sued because professor **George Carey** gave him a grade "significantly lower" than any he'd previously received, dropping his GPA from 3.94 to 3.91. ❧ When 20 L.A. politicians held a press conference to call for increased gun control, an inner-city resident demanded to know how many lived in the inner city. Zero, says the *Los Angeles Times*. ❧ Some 40 religious activists spanning the gamut of politics and denominations recently met in closed session in Washington to discuss ways to pool resources to serve the poor. A similar group met in April partly to protest the slighting of religious groups at the presidential summit on volunteerism. ❧ In what may be a new record, *Washington Post* baby-boomer columnist **Richard Cohen** used a first-person pronoun 88 times in a 51-sentence piece. ❧ "At the end of the twentieth-century," **Robert MacNeil** told fellow journalists, "the parents have gone away. There is no one to scold us anymore. We are people off the moral leash in the news business as well as everything else." · · · The nurse at a New York City public high school decorates her office with boxes of mint-flavored condoms labeled "ONLY for oral sex." ❧ *Time*'s **Declan McCullagh** reports that CyberPatrol, a "smut-blocking" program for the Internet, seems to have a left-wing bias: It also blocks the conservative Heritage Foundation's site and BoldBooks Christian Cyberstore. ❧ "When the character **Ellen** came out, millions of Americans were forced to look at sexual orientation in a more open light," Vice President **Gore** told a Hollywood gathering. That reminded **Robert Knight** of the Family Research Council of remarks by an official at the Patent and Trademark Office concerning their pro-homosexual "diversity" policy: "it's got to be forced down [the workers'] throats."

Two recent polls: 94 percent of Americans believe divorce harms children; 85 percent of responding lawyers told the Bar Association they oppose a return to fault-based divorce. · · · As the number of meals eaten at home declines, supermarkets are considering providing movie theaters and live music to boost sales. · · · Pediatric researchers report that chronic middle-ear infections have risen sharply among pre-schoolers as use of day care increases. · · · The Right and Left are both wrong to think government can fix the family's biggest problem, author **Elizabeth Kristol** argues: "We can ask government not to ride roughshod over the authority of parents, and we can even work to end programs that encourage people…to misbehave. But for parents who are cowed by their own children, new government programs are not the answer." · · · One survey found a significant difference in healthy "adjustment" between teenagers who ate a meal with an adult in their family about five times a week versus those who did so three times a week. ❧ Teenage girls contract gonorrhea about 1½ times as often as boys, the Centers for Disease Control calculate. ❧ A skilled labor shortage hampers Honda's plans to expand its Ohio plant. · · · GM imported more light vehicles into the U.S. from Canada alone than Toyota imported from Canada and Japan combined. ❧ More than a dozen summer camps teach kids entrepreneurship, including feminist-run Camp $tart-up, where 30 girls spent $1,400 for a week of pretending to run a juice bar-café-bookstore. · · · A Falls Church, Virginia service club asked 260 high school students their biggest worry. The top reply: finding an after-school job and making money. · · · A 12,000-student study by the federal government shows teens who work 20+ hours a week during school "are more likely to be emotionally distressed, drink, smoke, use drugs, and have early sex," reports the *Wall Street Journal*. ❧ **Patrick Sodders** says his 21-year-old son **William** dreamed of acting out the violence in his favorite film, *Natural Born Killers*. William's father turned him in to police after he randomly shot an off-duty firefighter ❧ "I didn't think we should take the opportunity away from men to have a single-sex education," says **Kimberly Herbert**, one of the Virginia Military Institute's first female cadets. · · · After the U.S. Justice Department sued it for discrimination, Arkansas agreed to hire 400 more female guards for its men's prisons. The new guards' duties will include stopping rapes and monitoring the showers. ❧ **Hillary Clinton**, observes the *Washington Times*, has attacked actress **Julia Roberts** for smoking a cigarette in a recent movie, but not for other vices portrayed, including prostitution. · · · Mrs. **Richard Thomas** is being sued by her husband of 43 years, who says the Clean Air Act's prohibitions of public smoking ought to also bar private acts like his wife's five to six cigarettes a day. ❧ A disgruntled business group suggests Republicans in Congress use this slogan next election: "I did nothing. I liked it. I want to do it again."

—*SW*



"How can you punish me for mirroring society?"

From the Wall Street Journal—Permission, Cartoon Features Syndicate

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3 ways pharmaceuticals are ganging up against healthcare costs.

$600-million/yr. potential savings with a blood thinning drug which can prevent 40,000 strokes/yr. associated with atrial fibulation.

Source: Port Study, AHCPR

$23,000 saved per yr. per patient with a schizophrenia drug which allows for outpatient treatment.

Source: American Psychiatry, 1993

$1-billion/yr. potential savings with ACE inhibitors which can prevent one-third of hospitalizations due to heart failure.

Source: SOLVD Study, 1991

Pharmaceutical Research And Manufacturers Of America

PhRMA 1100 Fifteenth Street, NW, Washington, DC 20005 http://www.phrma.org

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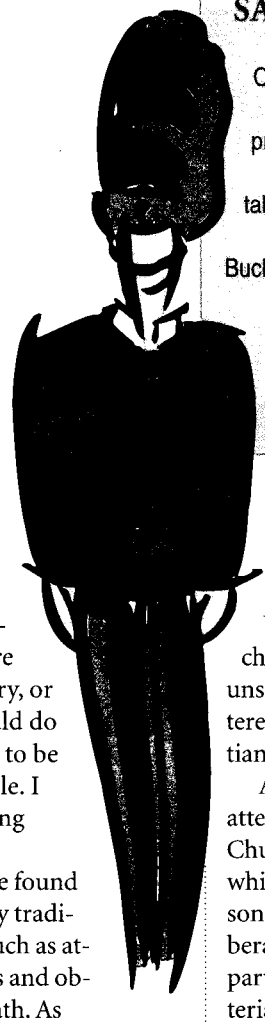
SCAN



SAVE THE HATS

Our P.C. Department reports that protests by animal lovers may force the tall bearskin hats worn by guards at Buckingham Palace to be replaced with synthetic ones. What's next—vinyl baseballs in the World Series?

REBELLING BACKWARD

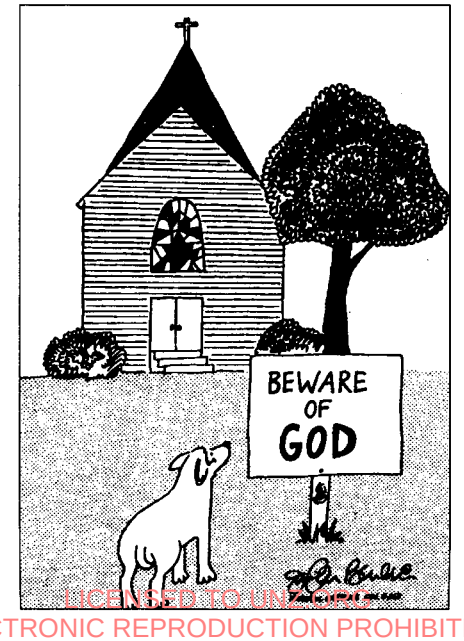
She's straight as an arrow, but 29-year-old Meg Kilgannon makes her mother awfully nervous. True, Kilgannon is already a homeowner, has been married since 1995, and is expecting her first child this February. Nevertheless, Meg's mother worries that her daughter has gone off the deep end. Has Meg cast her lot with the Black Panthers, the animal rights crowd, or some other youthful indulgence designed to shock her elders?

Nope. It's that pesky traditional faith that Meg has lately adopted. Raised Presbyterian in a relatively secular household, she converted to Catholicism when she married. Now with her husband, Tom, she attends church regularly.

Most Generation Xers weren't even born when *Time* famously declared "God Is Dead." But today He seems alive and well among twentysomethings and thirtysomethings. Nearly half of all Gen Xers say church teachings influence their daily decisions. And there's sociological and anecdotal evidence that many young men and women now attend churches and synagogues more theologically conservative than those they grew up in. They can't stomach priests who worship the liberal trinity of sensitivity, tolerance, and diversity, or rabbis who take their sermons verbatim from the *New York Times*' editorial page. Their more tradition-minded faith leaves many of their elders baffled, uneasy, or just plain out of the picture.

Take "Seymour Galinsky," a Washington-area law student. Growing up in a small, Southern town with a minuscule Jewish population, Galinksy (who didn't want his real name used) attended services at the local Reform Temple, which emphasized the cultural and historical aspects of Judaism. This left him unsatisfied. "I wanted more than great Jews in history, or what the Holocaust could do for our identity, or how to be more socially responsible. I felt like they were holding something back."

In graduate school, he found that something—namely traditional Jewish worship, such as attending Shabbat services and observing the Jewish Sabbath. As Galinsky moved more and more toward tradition, his father grew increasingly nervous, as if he expected Galinsky to come home "in a black hat and a beard. My father thought being Orthodox meant being weird; he didn't realize you could be Orthodox and modern," says the beardless Galinsky.



Although raised Presbyterian in Wheaton, Illinois, John Wilson had a parallel experience. Now 33, Wilson recalls that the Presbyterian church he attended growing up left him unsatisfied. Everyone "seemed more interested in social issues than in Christianity."

As a graduate student, Wilson started attending an all-black Baptist church. Church members welcomed their lone white congregate with open arms. Wilson, in turn, reveled in the church's "exuberance" and "passion"—a welcome departure from growing up among Presbyterians known as the "frozen chosen."

Today, he attends an Upper East Side church and is grateful that the pastor studies scripture on its own terms. "The current pastor is taking us through the Book of Romans. Yesterday we went through two verses. He goes into it in depth and talks about our faith. He doesn't relate it to unemployment or something; that way the church doesn't become an outlet of the Republican or Democratic party."

Jana Novak, a 25-year-old aide to House Speaker Newt Gingrich, recalls that the chapel at Duke University was often packed during her years there. Some students "just wanted to rebel against their parents because their parents were '60s wackos and the only way to stake out a new position was to go to church. That was the thing they could do to tick Mom and Dad off." Novak's growing spirituality certainly isn't ticking her father off. She and Catholic theologian Michael Novak are working on a book, *Tell Me Why: A Father Answers His Daughter's Questions About God*.

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National Review's 32-year-old literary editor David Klinghoffer is writing a book on his own journey to Orthodox Judaism. He says Gen Xers sense "they weren't told the whole story as kids. There's a difference between being told you're Jewish and being told that God lives and that He cares what you do about your life."

In 1996, a Duke University professor provoked a campus furor when he called for the closing of the college chapel, deeming religion "outmoded." Angry students—Hindus, Jews, Bahais, and Christians—bitterly denounced the idea. In the end, the only person who seemed "outmoded" was the professor. And at Yale University, Orthodox Jews are now locked in a furious, curious legal battle with the school administration. The students claim that being forced to live in Yale's over-sexed co-ed dormitories violates Judaism's requirement of modesty in the presence of the opposite sex.

Ah, kids. So rebellious these days. Meanwhile, Meg Kilgannon finds that the generation gap is much in evidence every time she attends church. "People in line for confession," she says, "they're either my grandmother's age or my age." Indeed, Duke University chaplain William Willmon tells students, "When I was young, church was something your mother wanted you to do. [Today] it's a way of getting back at your old lady."

—Evan Gahr writes regularly on education and culture for The American Enterprise.

ABUSED CHILD SYNDROME

Oliver Stone has just written a book about his upbringing as a wealthy only child in New York City, and one of your editors recently sat in at a stop on his nationwide tour. Readers familiar with Stone's films will not be surprised to learn that his childhood was extremely disturbed. His French mother abandoned the family a number of times to run off with different men, and personally initiated her son into sexuality when Oliver was a teenager. ("I raised him very freely," Mrs. Stone told the *Washington Post.*) His Yale-graduate Jewish stockbroker father, meanwhile, was an emotionally detached man hooked on Scotch and call girls, whose main counsel to his son on women was "Find 'em, f*** 'em, and forget 'em." When Stone was 16, his father hired him a prostitute.

Stone freely confesses that these experiences left him badly damaged. The Oliver Stone in his book is suicidal, violent, sexually obsessed with his mother, and emotionally scarred. In interviews, Stone says of his drug use, "I love it." He also admits to compulsive philandering and says that "marriage is a Christian cultural defect." A new book on the making of his film *Natural Born Killers* reports that he was high on mushrooms and romping with young women during production.

In the midst of his book tour, reminders also surfaced that Stone has trouble portraying the truth in his movies. In Syracuse, state senator Nancy Larraine Hoffmann—who was a student at the 1970 Syracuse anti-war protest portrayed in *Born on the Fourth of July*—noted that his depiction of police brutality raining down upon the students was completely untrue. Stone publicly apologized.

STOMACH TURN

Speaking of Oliver Stone, what pathfinding theme do you suppose his most recent movie, *U-Turn,* is built on? Try father-daughter incest.

The movie is actually just one small part of what has become the latest stampede against moral taboos by the Hollywood herd. Literally ten movies have been released in recent months that feature an incest theme. *A Thousand Acres, The Sweet Hereafter, Eve's Bayou, Cold Heart,* and others turn on father-daughter relationships. *The House of Yes* features a warped brother-sister bond, as did the movie that may have kicked this latest fad off: *Lone Star* by '60s-kid director John Sayles.

With theaters full of incest and television awash in homosexual twists, what plot lines are left for icon-smashers seeking shock effect? Perhaps a tale of happily married men and women who think of movie stars as ridiculous weirdos?

UNSCRUPULOUS LEFTIES NEVER DIE—THEY TAKE OVER LABOR UNIONS

In the November 2 issue of the "progressive" biweekly *In These Times,* Joel Kotkin and I received a blistering attack from Joel Bleifuss ("Defunding the Labor Movement: The Right Takes on Sweeney's Resurgent AFL-CIO") for articles published in *The American Enterprise* highlighting organized labor's new tilt to the radical left. Bleifuss accused me of "red-baiting" for exposing AFL-CIO President John Sweeney's membership in the Democratic Socialists of America, and for noting that Sweeney's ascension was lauded by the aging remnants of the American Communist party.

While I hate to criticize a *TAE* reader, Bleifuss's timing could hardly have been worse. In late September, delegates at the 1997 AFL-CIO convention in Pittsburgh puzzled many by amending the labor federation's constitution to drop the clause that barred anyone who was "a member of the Communist party, any fascist organization, or any totalitarian movements" from serving "as an Executive Officer or member of the Executive Council." George Meyers, head of the Labor Commission of the Communist Party USA, lauded this "removal of the vicious and illegal 'anti-communist' clause that has befouled the AFL-CIO Constitution since its founding in 1955." He added that the move is "a key to where the 'new' AFL-CIO

MORE LABOR PAINS

Big Labor's troubles don't end with the criminal charges now swirling. Political reformers in the state of California have just placed the Campaign Reform Initiative (CRI) on the 1998 ballot. It would prohibit unions from withholding any portion of a worker's dues for political purposes without first obtaining annual written consent. The CRI enjoys overwhelming public support and will probably be voted on in July. Americans for Tax Reform reports that similar initiatives will soon be on the ballot in Oregon, with votes also possible in Colorado, Nevada, and Arizona.

Just how bad is this for union bosses living off coerced donations? After a similar paycheck-protection measure passed in Washington State, the largest teachers' union saw an 83 percent drop in contributors, from 48,000 to 8,000.

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is going." Then on October 4, the FBI arrested three longtime radical activists for allegedly spying for the East German government. Most prominent among those charged was Kurt Stand of the International Union of Food and Allied Workers' Associations. Stand also happens to be a member of the National Political Committee—the governing body of Sweeney's Democratic Socialists of America.

Bleifuss's warning of a McCarthyite conspiracy was echoed in the November 17 edition of *The Nation*. There, leftist Alexander Cockburn decried "an old-fashioned witch hunt" against organized labor and the progressive Left, primarily aimed at Sweeney, AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka, and Teamsters President Ron Carey. Cockburn's thesis was echoed in "Fed Witch Hunt Targets Labor," the lead editorial in the November 22 issue of the Communist party's *People's Weekly World*.

Actually, this "witch hunt" is turning out to be the biggest scandal in the recent history of organized labor, with Teamsters President Carey being thrown out of office by Justice Department monitors and barred from seeking re-election. Numerous liberal groups ranging from the Democratic party to Citizen Action to the National Council of Senior Citizens to advocates of marijuana legalization apparently took part in an elaborate, illegal funds-swap scheme designed to install Sweeney-favorite Carey as Teamsters' head.

Prominent among those cooking up this corruption were former members of the radical '60s organization Students for a Democratic Society—who infiltrated organized labor and the Democratic party while remaining loyal to the SDS creed of breaking the law in the name of "revolution." One-time Harvard SDS leader Michael Ansara has already pled guilty to funneling illegal contributions to Carey's campaign. More amusingly, the conspirators also included "good government" progressives like Carey's campaign manager, Jere Nash, who once ran the Mississippi chapter of Common Cause—the self-proclaimed "clean politics" group!

Another liberal "reform" organization, Citizen Action, was also unmasked by the probe as a corrupt front for organized labor. The organization—which was founded by SDS alum-turned-Democratic National Committee labor liaison Heather Booth—seems to have laundered $475,000 directly from the cash-strapped Teamsters and another $150,000 indirectly through top Sweeney lieutenant and AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka, in exchange for donations to Carey's perversely named Teamsters for a Corruption Free Union. Trumka, the number-two man at the labor federation, recently pled the Fifth when asked about his role in Carey campaign financing.

Even a miniscule Milwaukee-based socialist organization, the New Party (a consortium of New Leftists who ran pediatrician Benjamin Spock for President in 1968) received $5,000 from the Teamsters. Perhaps this was because Barbara Zack Quindel, the Court-appointed government monitor for the Teamsters election, was a prominent New Party member along with her husband. As it happened, Quindel ignored a ton of evidence of labor's finagling while piling up almost $1 million in billable hours expensed to the taxpayers over 29 months—until a U.S. Attorney turned up incontrovertible evidence of malfeasance by Carey supporters requiring a new election. And when she was finally forced to call a new election, she chose to keep her findings secret at a crucial moment so as not to weaken Ron Carey's negotiating position during last August's UPS strike.

A Who's Who of union leaders are also alleged to have drummed up improper contributions to install Carey: Gerald McEntee, president of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees and a big Sweeney supporter, solicited $20,000 in contributions; Andrew Stern, president of the Services Employees International Union and another Sweeney confidante, agreed to raise $50,000; and Paul Booth, political strategist for the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (and, incidentally, husband of Citizen Action founder Heather Booth) chipped in $27,000.

With Carey now barred from seeking re-election, and with more indictments and guilty pleas certain to come, the "new" Labor is hurting. And its apologists don't look too well either.

*—**Kenneth Weinstein** is director of the Government Reform Project at the Heritage Foundation.*

BOLD POLICY ESSAYS WANTED. DISCONNECTION FROM REAL WORLD NOT A PROBLEM.

After carefully examining many worthy candidates, we conclude that the "Lefties Who Learn Nothing Award" for this month is a tie:

- *Winner #1* is a recent essay in *The American Prospect* in which author Sudhir Venkatesh argues that "public housing doesn't look so bad when the alternative is to be thrown into the low end of the private housing market, where the social support networks of housing projects do not exist." As an illustration of these rich supports, the author quotes one elderly resident of a project: "At least around here we always know who the criminals are."

- *Winner #2* is John Judis's November 3 *New Republic* take on Japan's regulation-crippled economy. "If anything, Japan needs more not less government planning," Judis concludes. And while he's at it, he mentions that America is being "disarmed" by free-market advocates—leaving "its major manufacturers at a disadvantage against state-subsidized competitors." The government-manipulated economies of Asia are yet going to eclipse the U.S., Judis insists. Don't be distracted by the fact that the Japanese economy has just entered its seventh year of painful contraction.

We'll be shipping two prizes—inspirational pewter-framed photos of a TVA dam defaced by graffiti—just as soon as we can figure out how to get them into the offices of two magazines that are apparently impervious to new information.

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DEVASTATION, NOT DISCRIMINATION

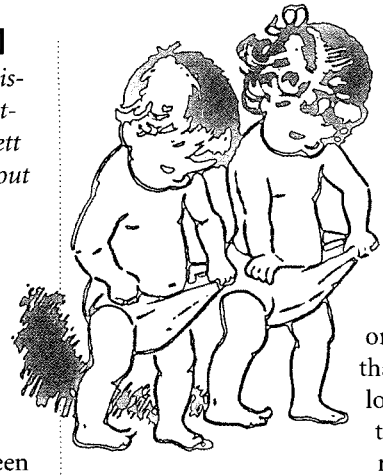
The day after President Clinton made history by becoming the first President to attend a homosexual gala, William Bennett had this to say on ABC*'s "This Week" about the President's address:*

"If the President was going to come and speak out in a sympathetic and compassionate way about the problems of gay America, he avoided the enormous issue. And the enormous issue confronting gay America, of course, is not discrimination, but devastation. It would have been good for the President to come before that audience last night and say, 'Look, the promiscuous lifestyle of homosexual men is devastating the homosexual community. I have talked to the American people before about smoking; smoking takes seven years off your life. If you're a homosexual male in this country, it takes *30* years off your life—66 is life expectancy for smokers, 43 for a male homosexual. This is tough news. It's not pleasant to hear. But it's very important, and it's part of telling the truth.'"

IT PASSES FOR EDUCATION

The National Association for the Education of Young Children is the major standard-setting and certification-granting body for America's day-care establishment. Its "Anti-bias Curriculum," now circulating at most of the nation's day-care centers, urges "appropriate" practices like the following:

- Teachers are to "beware of children's books picturing families with only two parents, and always with one parent of each sex."
- Chapter 9, "Activism with Young Children," suggests taking children on field trips to protest government cutbacks. It also calls for identifying oppressive situations that might be addressed by boycotts or demonstrations during day-care sessions.
- Recommended readings to children include *Jenny Lives with Eric and Martin, My Daddy Don't Go to Work, Father Gander Nursery Rhymes,* and *William's Doll.* Teachers are urged to quell incipient homophobia in two- and three-year-olds, and to "be prepared to address both gender and sexual differentiations" among their preschool students.



Someone once said that "the philosophy of the classroom in one generation will be the philosophy of society in the next." The National Association for the Education of Young Children is based in Washington, D.C. (800-424-2460).

*—**Cheri Pierson Yecke** is a member of the Virginia State Board of Education.*

WARMER OR JUST POORER?

Global warming is to the Clinton-Gore administration what demon rum was to prohibitionists, as we saw at the recent Kyoto shindig. According to the computer models they favor, the earth's temperatures should increase by between 1.5 and 3.5 degrees centigrade over the next century due to the burning of fossil fuels and the release of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. In fact, according to the same models, temperatures should already have gone up by an easily detectable 0.2 to 0.3 degrees over the last two decades. Problem is, they didn't.

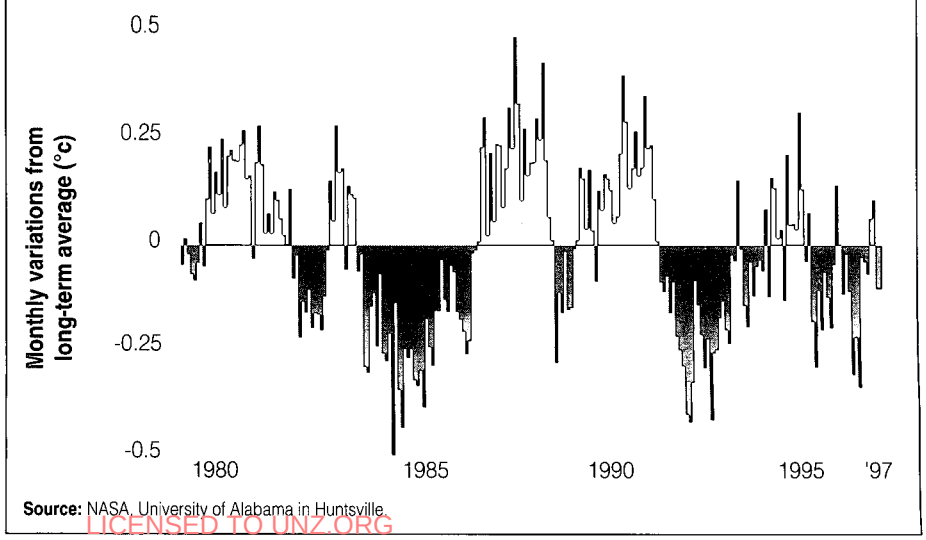
The most accurate data from satellite measurements find no warming at all over the last 18 years (see chart below). Instead, the most recent reports reveal that far from going up, Earth's average temperature is actually *0.1 degree below the ten-year average.* The accuracy of these satellite measurements has recently been confirmed by weather balloon data. In deep denial, Vice President Gore now regularly equates scientists who cite the satellite measurements to "tobacco scientists" who doubt that smoking causes cancer.

Meanwhile, efforts to create a costly international regime to restrict the use of fossil fuels continues on heedlessly. This past summer the President declared, "You cannot make me believe that we can't reduce greenhouse gas emissions substantially and still grow the American economy. We could reduce them 20 percent tomorrow with technology that is already available at no cost if we just changed the way we do things."

In late September, as part of the White House Climate Change campaign, the Department of Energy (DOE), right on cue, issued a report to back up the President's astonishing claims. DOE dutifully reported that savings from adopting new energy-efficient technologies will more than offset the costs of reducing carbon emissions to the 1990 level by 2010.

Among other things, DOE is counting on cars' becoming 3 times more fuel efficient, 70 cent-per-gallon ethanol, the widespread adoption of high-energy-efficiency appliances, and electricity

GLOBAL TEMPERATURE VARIATIONS



Source: NASA, University of Alabama in Huntsville

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produced by wind turbines. "They are essentially claiming that there are $20 bills lying on the ground that nobody's picking up," harrumphed one economist.

"Yeah, sure you might get those kind of savings if everybody decided to buy $20 light bulbs and drive Geo Metros," declared Bill O'Keefe, chairman of the Global Climate Change Coalition, an association of energy-producing and energy-using companies. "I'm skeptical," says Paul Portney, head of Resources for the Future, an independent Washington-based think tank. "If there truly are these big energy savings out there now, why aren't companies and consumers already taking advantage of them?"

What is at stake in this disagreement? Recent estimates for both industry and the AFL-CIO indicate economic costs ranging from 1.8 to 2.4 percent of GDP, with job losses ranging from 1.2 million to 1.8 million. In September, the economic modeling group WEFA concluded that reducing emissions to 1990 levels by 2010 would result in a removal from the economy of $227 billion in real dollars that year. This adds up to a cost of $2,061 per household for just one year. According to WEFA, by 2010, consumers would be paying 55 percent more for heating oil, 50 percent more for natural gas, 48 percent more for electricity, and 36 percent more for gasoline.

Similarly, DRI/McGraw-Hill concluded that holding emissions to the 1990 level would raise gasoline prices to $1.73 per gallon; natural gas prices would rise by 129 percent, coal prices by a whopping 482 percent, and electricity by 66 percent.

If the developing countries don't agree to limit how much carbon dioxide they emit, then some U.S. industries will simply move to countries where energy prices are lower. A study by the Argonne National Laboratory, which the Clinton team initially tried to suppress, looked at the effect limiting emissions would have on six major U.S. industries—chemicals, petroleum refining, paper, iron and steel, aluminum, and cement. The study minced no words: Increased energy costs "will devastate the U.S. steel industry" and "production will simply be shifted to developing countries." Higher energy prices "would devastate and probably eliminate" the oil-refining industry. The report uses similar language to describe the impact on the other four sectors.

But what if the more alarmist climate modelers turn out to be right and we can expect the planet to heat up if we don't reduce emissions? Do we have to act right now? An important new study published in the November 20 issue of *Nature* shows that carbon dioxide levels could be stabilized at double pre-industrial levels (the likely result of plans that start immediately), even if the world waited until 2010 before cutting emissions.

Jae Edmonds, chief scientist at the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, concurs. Edmonds and others note that waiting would give scientists and engineers time to develop less carbon-intensive energy technologies to which we can switch at much lower cost in coming decades.

So, happily, it appears that humanity needn't do anything rash before seeing if the climate modelers turn out to be right. If action is required, technological innovations and judicious capital investment in the meantime will make it possible to reduce carbon emissions more cheaply then, and still avoid significant problems.

*—**Ronald Bailey** is a free-lance writer and television producer in Washington, D.C., and editor of* The True State of the Planet.

BECOMING BIG BROTHER'S ACCOMPLICE

We recently received a letter from Cynthia Buell, a reader who managed the mandatory car-pooling program forced on her company by California environmentalists. Her story provides a taste of what all Americans could face if the draconian limits on fossil fuels called for by "global warming" alarmists are enacted:

The most horrible experience in my 20 years of employment was accommodating the "Work Trip Reduction Plan" imposed by our local Air Quality Management District (AQMD). Shortly after I was promoted to my present position at Time, Inc., the company was required to concoct a complex plan that would be our contribution to clean-air regulation. This involved my churning out rules to coerce employees to car-pool or use public transit.

After weeks of calling government offices, plus a required three-day class, I found there are no set requirements for a company's Work Trip Reduction Plan. The only instructions I received were along the lines of, "Well, you could try paying employees to car-pool. Or you could try *not* paying for their parking. Or you could try ride-share fairs." "But what am I *required* to do?" I kept asking. There was no answer.

This "flexibility" did not make it easier for companies to comply, as claimed, but rather made it easier for bureaucrats to make arbitrary judgments about the company plans we drew up. As employee transportation coordinator, I was virtually conscripted into the ranks of government enforcers. The teacher of my AQMD class said I should spy on our employees to make sure they were really car-pooling. I was shocked to find that I was expected to interrogate employees to confirm that all car-pool partners told the same story, and required to lurk outside the parking garage to catch cheaters. All this snooping was to be meticulously documented, with a smile of course.

I was expected to repeatedly pester hard-working employees with memos, flyers, e-mail, and intrusive, chirpy phone calls asking why they weren't car-pooling or taking the bus. Never mind that most of our staff are writers or sales people who need access to cars during the day to do their jobs. Never mind that being pushed into public transportation and car-pools can lead to increased commuting time, and/or waiting for rides. Never mind that spur-of-the-moment after-work drinks, dinners, and movies become impossible, as do errands on the way to or from work. Nothing was to stand in the way of the agenda. And of course, it cost the company a fortune.

I would have been appalled by all this even if it "worked." But in fact all this busybodying resulted in not one person car-pooling who wasn't already doing so when the regulation went out. Despite all of the money, time, and hard work squan-

HOW DARE YOU, SIR?

When Ann Curry of "Today" interviewed Paul Harris, the first black Republican elected to the Virginia House of Delegates since 1891, she was quick to put him in his place: "You were raised, sir, in a subsidized housing project by a single mother, and yet you support welfare reform and oppose affirmative action. How do you square those two sides?"

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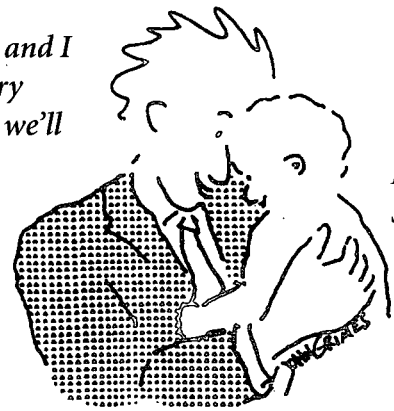
dered on Work Trip Reduction Plans statewide, hardly a ripple has been made in the number of people sharing rides or taking buses. The reason is not that people are pampered and selfish, but that they value their time and freedom highly.

One of the happiest days of my life occurred when the rule was changed to require only companies with over 250 employees to formulate Work Trip Reduction Plans. But I live in fear of having to become Big Brother's accomplice again if the rule ever changes back.

"Casey, your mother and I are very busy and very frugal, which means we'll underpay a series of undocumented immigrants to care for you—but we'll buy you off with tons of toys, okay, Casey?"



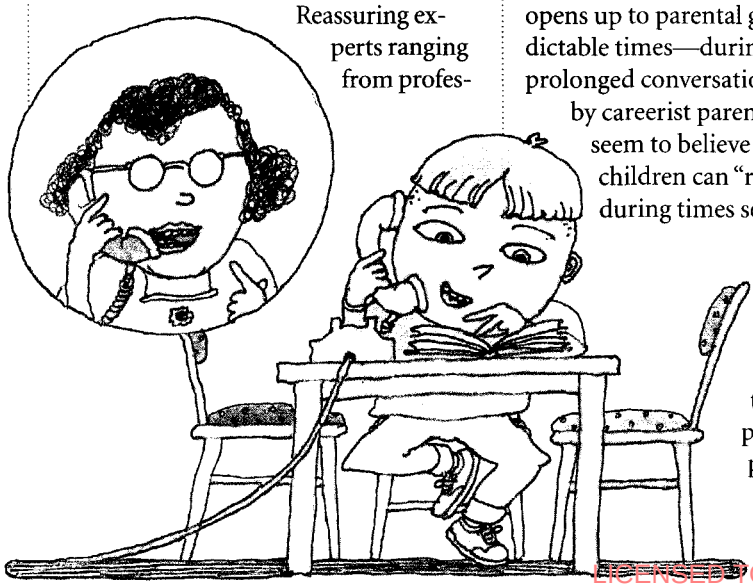
"Cool! Maybe I'll learn Spanish."

FIRST MAN-TO-MAN

HIGH-TECH PARENTING

The parental crisis is over. Salvation has arrived in the form of technology that opens up a whole new world of Remote Parenting. One pioneer of the movement is attorney Mary Croft. Too busy to talk with her 12-year-old daughter about the happenings of a school day, boy-and-girl things, or permission to stop over at a friend's house, Ms. Croft purchased a pair of beepers so the child could cue her mom "talk needed" as the mother-attorney raced around taking care of her clients. Alas, the beepers didn't prove efficient enough. The elder Croft often found that when her daughter needed a response, the phone booths on street corners or in airport stalls were occupied. So a pair of cellular phones were added to the mother-daughter relationship.

Parents are not to worry that beep-and-ring relations are less affectionate than old-fashioned talks-and-hugs on the way to Little League, or while stacking dishes in the washer. Reassuring experts ranging from professors to electronic device-makers insist that "teleparenting"—or, more advanced yet, "virtual parenting"—is the wave of the future. For long-distance parenting to succeed, psychologists promise, children need only have clear routines. Once those are in place, parents can click in to check that the TV has been turned off as scheduled and homework turned on; that the wholesome tuna sandwich has been prepared; and that the dog (who does not get the beep-and-ring thing yet) has been let out. Those who fear that children will learn to game the system—turning off the idiot box when the phone rings, claiming to be home on the third beep while they are actually in a friend's liquor cabinet—need not panic. Surely the industry is hard at work designing cellular picture phones armed with place-identifiers, using satellites to verify the exact location of the speaker.



"Quality time" has long since replaced quantity time in many high-powered homes. The notion that a child opens up to parental guidance at unpredictable times—during a long walk, a prolonged conversation—is discounted by careerist parents. Many now seem to believe that they and their children can "relate" on demand, during times set aside for that purpose. Today's new twist is that even the truncated face-to-face "quality time" is being replaced—by quality phone calls. Tax accountant Jane Maddow says cellular phones are an indispensable part of her parenting. Almost every day, even at the busy peak of tax season, she will push other things aside so that she can talk, for as long as *five minutes*, to each of her two boys when they return home from school.

Computer scientists at Rice University are working on something called the cyborg blanket, with the aim of freeing parents from the heavy responsibility of tending infants. The "blanket" will play soothing music or pre-recorded warm words from mother or father when an infant engages in "low-intensity" crying. High-intensity crying will lead to a beep being broadcast to parents.

Parents had better keep these marvelous gizmos in good repair, because family get-togethers may soon be replaced by conference calls. Expect a beep and a ring at future wedding anniversaries or other big days. Cost will be no problem, because the children have been well trained to keep phone calls short, constantly reminded by the clicks of call-waiting that others compete with them for their parents' time. And as parents grow old and find themselves installed in a nursing home, they had better take a modem with them; e-mails from their children are sure to follow. As time allows.

*—**Amitai Etzioni** is University Professor at George Washington University.*

FIGHTING THE PARTY LINE

Esther Splaine calls them "my girls"—the 17 teenagers who belong to Girls Against Premarital Sex, a support group Splaine started last year for public

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school girls who want to remain abstinent until marriage.

"I tell my girls to call me any time, 24 hours a day, if they need help. I've got five kids of my own; so I'm already on call 'round the clock. What's 17 more?" she asks with a big smile.

Splaine is the school nurse at Charlestown Public High School on the north side of Boston, down by the wharves, surrounded by public housing projects and industrial buildings. Most of the students are from blue-collar or welfare families, and nearly 90 percent are minorities bused in from other parts of the city.

That's the crux of the issue in Splaine's mind. "People seem to think that poor girls and minority girls are different from other people. Well, they're not. They have exactly the same dreams other girls have—they dream of getting married, having babies, and living in a nice house. Sex before marriage has a way of taking all that away."

Once a week, after school, the girls gather to talk about chastity. It was Splaine's idea to start the group, but the girls came up with the name. They're not just waiting to have sex until a special man comes into their lives. "It's right there, in the name they picked. They want to wait until marriage," she explains.

Each girl contributes $1 per session to cover the orange juice and bagels brought by Splaine and volunteer Wendy Berube. In the group, they discuss strategies for dealing with boyfriends who want to have sex. Sometimes they have role-playing sessions.

There are a few rules, including (1) the girls in the group must, with their parents' guidance, choose a church, temple, or mosque, and attend it weekly, and (2) they must join a church-related youth group.

"All of my girls are attractive. And I tell them, 'You spend all that time making yourselves beautiful on the outside. What's more important is making yourself beautiful on the inside,'" says Splaine, 49, a member of Dorchester Temple Baptist Church. Her husband, John, is a guidance counselor in the public school system.

Though Splaine's is the only group of its kind in Boston public schools, she's not yet had any trouble with school officials. And she says she's not alone among school nurses; many others believe as she does. "We're tired of getting the party line: 'as long as kids use a condom they'll be fine.' In fact, there are many of us who see that as a racist statement: 'those minorities can't control themselves,'" says Splaine, who is African American.

Every girl in the group—and almost every girl who comes into her office on a sex-related issue—has experienced "the talk," as Splaine calls it. "I take them into my office, sit them down, and explain it to them this way: I draw a circle on a piece of paper, and I tell them, 'Every time you give yourself to a man, you give away a piece of yourself that you can never get back,'" says Splaine, as she draws a circle and takes a big chunk out of it. "And then you sleep with another man, and another one," she says, taking more and more chunks out of the circle. "Until, eventually, there's nothing left inside."

She said that in her experience, most teenage sex is for the boy's benefit, and at the girl's expense. "Do you really think girls are having sex because they're enjoying it? What teenage girls really want is a boyfriend who will hold their hand, spend time with them, talk for hours on the phone. It's the boys who are pressuring them for sex," said Splaine.

The cost, for the girls, can be monumental. "We have 18-year-old girls walking around this high school who are sterile because of sexually transmitted diseases, and they don't even know it," says Splaine. She says she's realistic in her advice, but she's careful to avoid man-bashing. "I'm not a man-hater. How could I be? I have a husband, I have two sons, and I have six brothers," says Splaine, one of 11 children.

She is not required to hand out condoms; the nurse at the next desk, who runs a separate "school-based health clinic," does that. But whenever she can, Splaine gives a motherly lecture to the boys. For now, that's all that she has time for, she says.

"Most of these boys don't know what makes a real man. Maybe the Lord will raise someone up to start a group for them. I have my hands full at the moment."

—Kathleen Howley, a Boston-based freelance journalist, writes for the Boston Globe *and* Catholic World Report.

DEBT 101

Rep. Mark Neumann (R-Wisc.) has introduced a bill to require that the federal government run surpluses which would then be used to reduce the national debt. Opponents argue that such a move is unnecessary, since the national debt has essentially no net impact on future generations. Since the debt is just a measure of what current taxpayers owe current bondholders, the argument goes, the national debt is just a tally of what one group of Americans has borrowed from another, and hence has no intergenerational consequences. This "debt irrelevance" view has received a lot of attention in Washington policy circles, especially among liberals who would rather spend any available federal money. Like many liberal arguments, it sounds intelligent but is wrong.

A simple example illustrates the problem. Suppose you have parents with substantial wealth. What effect would it have on your inheritance if your dad borrowed $10,000 from your mom? While you would inherit both your mom's asset and your dad's liability, the real effect on your inheritance depends on how the transaction changes what happens to the money. Suppose, for example, that your mom always saves every penny, while your father, a gambler, takes money straight to the racetrack and loses it. In that case, dad's

OTHER PEOPLE'S MONEY

Later in these pages, Charles Murray argues that governmental hand-outs hinder private charitable efforts, but he doesn't know the half of it. Consider the case of Senator John Kerry (D-Mass.). This adamantly liberal pol has long lavished your tax dollars on governmental "charity." But when private charities came knocking at his door, they received the old "I gave at the office!"

Jeff Jacoby of the *Boston Globe* did some checking and discovered that in 1995, on a salary of $126,179 and claiming no dependents, this friend of the downtrodden gave exactly zip to charity. From 1990-94 he gave a total of $4,869, out of a cumulative income of over $724,000—or less than 0.7 percent.

Shortly before his lack of generosity became an issue, Sen. Kerry married Theresa Heinz, heir to about three-quarters of a billion dollars. We're reliably informed that he's now helping to spend her money as well as yours.

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IF THE PINK SLIP FITS...

Everyone knows that NBC gave Marv Albert a pink slip a few months ago. What you may not have heard, however, is that Albert immediately tried to put it on. We have also learned that Albert got a replacement job right away—doing sound bites. Both of these scoops from *TAE* correspondent Blake Hurst.

loan makes your inheritance go down by $10,000, even though the immediate "balance sheet" effect of the loan is a wash. Conversely, if your dad is a brilliant stock analyst, while your mom always invests in Apple Computer stock, your inheritance could go up because of the transaction. Your dad will pay off the IOU when his stock goes up, and anything left over may well go to you when your parents pass on. By itself, then, aggregate family debt tells you nothing about how your inheritance is doing.

Now suppose there are two countries, one with a national debt of $1,000 per citizen, and another with a national debt of $100,000 per citizen. Which country is the better place to be a newborn? It all depends on what the governments are doing with the money. If the second country funneled the money into private investments with high returns, while the first used the money to subsidize current consumption, then you might prefer to inherit the $100,000 debt.

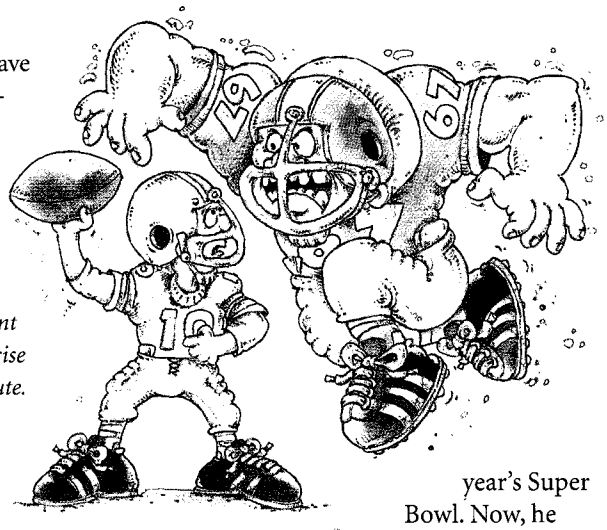
So: would it be good to keep federal tax revenues somewhat higher than current spending so that we can retire some of the national debt? By now you know the answer: It depends on how the transaction changes what happens to your money.

If the federal revenues in question would otherwise be used for Department of Energy "research grants" to Al Gore's campaign donors (who in turn spend the money on expensive French wines), then it would clearly be better to use the money to pay off debt. If surplus tax revenues were to be invested in high-return projects such as a school voucher program, then paying debt down might be a less advantageous alternative for future generations. A third option would be simply to leave the money in the private economy and never tax it into federal coffers in the first place. That would clearly be better than more research grants; how it would compare to funding a voucher program is unclear.

SCAN

The bottom line is, if you have doubts about whether the government can be trusted to use your dollars wisely, and you question whether your taxes will actually be cut, then you should support Mark Neumann's bill.

—Kevin Hassett is a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute.



AMERICA'S TEAM

For devotees of our nation's great martial art—football—this is an exciting time of year. But some collections of players are even more inspiring than others. One of the teams that generates the most devotion among Americans is the Green Bay Packers. I lived in Wisconsin for much of a decade, and for my bratwurst, there's no football franchise more deserving of affection.

Packerland—centered on Green Bay, an industrial town of 90,000 people—is middle America. Local residents are intensely loyal to their team—for better or worse, 'til death do they part. (If then—an undertaker in Green Bay sells coffins with Packers insignia.)

For years when the Packers were languishing in the basement of their division, fans proclaimed, "The Pack Will Be Back." Even during losing seasons, the waiting list for season tickets stretched from Madison to Milwaukee. Fair-weather fans they are not.

A columnist for the *Minneapolis Star-Tribune* sneered at the loyalty of Cheeseheads after their team won last year's Super Bowl. Now, he wrote, we'll have to hear "the inside story of some 52-year-old Beloit plumber who figured out a way to get the Packer polka to play every time he flushes his toilet." The response from one Packer fan: "Aren't there any more criminal or civil litigations from the Vikings organization to write about?"

The Packers and their fans have a special bond. One of the main drags in town is Lombardi Drive. There's an elementary school named after former quarterback Bart Starr. Many ex-players live in Green Bay long after they've hung up their cleats. After each Lambeau Field touchdown, Packer receivers launch the "Lambeau Leap" into the wild crowd.

Perhaps one reason for the special relationship between Green Bay and the Packers is the fact that the community owns the team. Fans know that the Packers will never load up trucks in the middle of the night to take off for other pastures.

The Packers also command fan respect because their central figures are men of admirable character like defensive lineman Reggie White, an ordained minister who raised money from his fellow players to rebuild churches. None of their players has landed on police blotters. The team appears to be a model of racial harmony. After a playoff victory last year, Coach Mike Holmgren said it all: "Maybe if we keep going for another ten years, there will be a little alley Green Bay can name in my honor."

—Ted Rueter earned a Ph.D. in political science from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

"I called you all here to demand my privacy."

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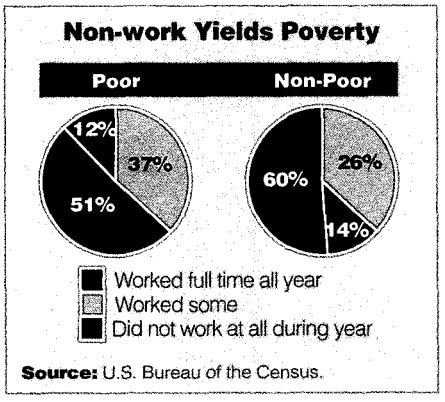
By Karl Zinsmeister

Indicators

HINTS FOR WELFARE REFORMERS

With welfare reform beginning to go into full swing in most states, many of the central questions about how to proceed can be answered by looking at poverty statistics.

For instance, on the basic question of whether requiring work is really likely to help, the answer is clearly yes. Census Bureau figures show that **only 12 percent of all poor people in the 18–64 age group worked full time in 1996.** If that could be raised to the same rate as the rest of the U.S. population (60 percent), then poverty would fall dramatically.



Critics of welfare reform sometimes say that efforts to convert recipients into workers will only succeed with the top portion of the welfare clientele. The rest are so enmeshed in underclass life as to make them unreachable, they warn.

Actually, though, even if you ignore all the recipients in rural areas and small towns, **fully 55 percent of urbanites on welfare live in normal neighborhoods.** This according to 1990 figures published by Paul Jargowsky in his book *Poverty and Place.* Only 16 percent of urban welfare recipients live in ghettoes where 40 percent or more of the households are in poverty. (The remainder live in neighborhoods in between.) Though there *is* a hardcore welfare underclass that will be difficult to reach through mainstream moral appeals and economic incentives, it may make up a smaller proportion of the total welfare caseload than many people imagine.

Another subject relevant to the unfolding of welfare reform is how one finds and motivates volunteers willing to offer one-on-one mentoring to the poor. Lots of evidence shows that **the strongest motivation for personal charitable effort is religious conviction.** Yet a study by Catholic University sociologist Dean Hoge and three co-authors finds that religious volunteers are not all alike. In fact there are striking differences among different types of churches.

For one thing, the researchers report, **"levels of volunteering are higher in conservative and evangelical churches."** And there are big variations even within these circles. The worshipers donating the most hours to their church are the Southern Baptists, at 3.4 hours per month per person. Ranking second are members of the Assemblies of God, averaging 3.2 hours each. Last among the five denominations studied are Catholics, at 1.6 hours.

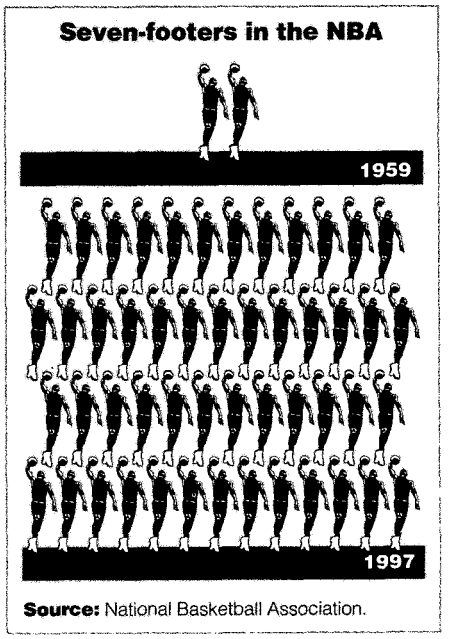
The researchers also looked at monetary contributions. On that front the leaders are the Assemblies of God, averaging $2,548 of church contributions per household in 1993. Ranking second are Southern Baptists, at $1,920 each. Last again are Catholics, at $833 a year.

SUPER-SIZE AMERICANS

Football and basketball seasons are in full swing, and there are wide bodies everywhere. If the players seem so big you're wondering if your television is beginning to distort, just relax: It's not your Sony. It's the Wheaties.

A survey of NCAA football teams by the College Football Association found that the average college lineman is now 75.3 inches tall (over 6'3"), and fully 253 pounds on the hoof. In 1949, by contrast, linemen averaged 72.6 inches and 195 pounds. The average back has also bulked up—from 177 pounds to 201.

And it isn't only in America's high-mass game where the boys have gotten bigger. When Wilt Chamberlain entered the NBA in 1959, he was only the fourth seven-footer to put on a uniform in the league's 13-year history. But during the 1997–98 season, there will be fully 50 men pounding up and down NBA courts from an altitude of seven feet or more.



The NBA's first championship team—1947's Philadelphia Warriors—averaged 6'2". Today's average team height is over 6'7".

Experts say **rich diets and good medical care are to thank for this American expansion.** Of course the trend isn't wholly positive. The National Center for Health Statistics reports that the proportion of U.S. children who are overweight has jumped from 5 percent in 1964 to 11 percent today.

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RICH, RICHER, RICHEST

A clamor has been raised in recent years by certain academics and reporters, as well as popular books like *The Winner-take-all Society,* that **claim earnings inequality has been rising sharply in the U.S.** An article in the *Harvard Business Review* argued not long ago that the U.S. is becoming an "apartheid economy" of very poor and very rich. Most of these arguments end up calling for economic change and controls on markets in order to bring about more "economic democracy."

Now along comes a burst of new studies, from a broad range of researchers, to shine interesting light on American income patterns.

In an Urban Institute report, economist Robert Lerman demonstrates that the conventional wisdom about earnings inequality being on the rise is all wrong. **Earnings at the top and bottom of the U.S. spectrum are no further apart now than in 1984,** he shows using Census Bureau data.

The mistake commonly made in this area, says Lerman, is a failure to compare apples to apples. When all types of workers are examined, and total earnings are compared, studies show **little change in earnings inequality since as far back as 1973,** he writes.

Lerman notes that the United States *has* experienced "increases in inequality of *family income* (rather than individual earnings) over the past decade," but he says this is a result of social changes—like the explosion of single-parenting, and sharp variations in work effort in different households—not of anything happening in the economy.

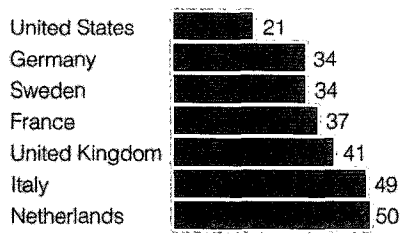
Poverty researcher Robert Haveman focuses specifically on working-age males and comes to much the same conclusion in a recent paper presented to the American Enterprise Institute. Fully **90 percent of the supposed increase in male earnings inequality between 1973 and 1988,** he finds, **is accounted for by the voluntary choices of some men to work less or not at all.** Some of these men are in college instead of the workforce. Some are retiring earlier. Some are simply choosing leisure over employment. Given this fact, Haveman concludes, there is little justification for thinking of earnings differences as a social problem or cause for governmental intervention.

Another AEI study carried out by two Cornell labor economists also focused on male earnings, and compared the wage-spread in the U.S. to the spread in nine other industrialized nations. Authors Francine Blau and Lawrence Kahn find that while pay ranges are much wider in the United States, "the distribution in other countries is much more compressed at the bottom."

In other words, **the reason the gap between top earners and bottom earners is wider in the U.S. is because the sky is higher here, and many more of our workers rise into the upper brackets.** In European countries, on the other hand, workers are more equally distributed but at lower rungs of the income ladder.

Yet a third AEI study, this one conducted by University of South Carolina economist McKinley Blackburn, examined a very different set of data and came to a quite complementary conclusion. Blackburn compared poverty levels across different industrial countries, using the same definition of absolute poverty for all countries. He found that **the income spectrum is wider in the U.S. than in other countries, but that thanks to the fact that our income *average* is so high, fewer Americans lack for basic needs.** (See chart below.)

Percentage of the Population with a Low Income as Defined in the U.S.



Note: This measure compares countries using a uniform standard of material welfare, and takes income, government transfers, and the effect of taxes into account. 1985 data.

Source: McKinley Blackburn, "Comparing Poverty: The U.S. and Other Industrial Countries," paper presented to AEI, Feb. 1997.

A grand overview of the latest income research is provided in an October 1997 paper by AEI economist Marvin Kosters. "The conventional wisdom," Kosters observes, "is that the average worker's real pay has been stagnant for many years, [while] the gap between the poor and those who are better off has widened." But these, he explains, are falsehoods built on statistics with "very serious deficiencies." After correcting for these flaws, **Kosters conservatively estimates that the pay of the average American worker has actually increased by about 25 percent after inflation since 1973.**

Kosters then examines the spread between high-paid and low-paid workers and finds that **the increase in wage inequality over the past 20 years "mainly reflects increased economic rewards for schooling and skills."** And paying the highly skilled more money, he concludes, is not a bad thing. Among other effects, the pay differential has caused a strong increase in the proportion of young people seeking out higher schooling.

Despite the increased wage premiums that now accrue to workers with education and skills, wage levels still vary a lot for reasons unrelated to education, notes Kosters. "The degree of polarization between workers in different schooling categories has been exaggerated," he reports. Employees lacking higher skills aren't doomed in the job market; nor are educated workers guaranteed high status.

A final bit of important new research on wealth and poverty was published recently by the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis. The rich, economist John Weicher finds, are predominantly middle-aged to elderly individuals at the culmination of their work lives. They are well-educated. Nearly all are married. The poorest 20 percent of U.S. households, on the other hand, are generally very young. Two-thirds are single. More than one-third haven't finished high school.

While the same *categories* of people tend to end up rich or poor, the actual individuals turn over a lot. And contrary to claims, few of today's wealthy were born with a silver spoon in their mouths—most of the country's well-to-do households inherited little or nothing from their families, Weicher discovers. Nor do financial instruments like stocks and bonds account for most affluence. Instead, **"small businesses or professional practices" are today's main sources of wealth.**

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"Live" with TAE

THE MOST SUCCESSFUL STAR IN HOLLYWOOD TALKS ABOUT HIS FILMS, 67 YEARS OF LIFE IN AMERICA, AND POLITICS, POLITICS, POLITICS.

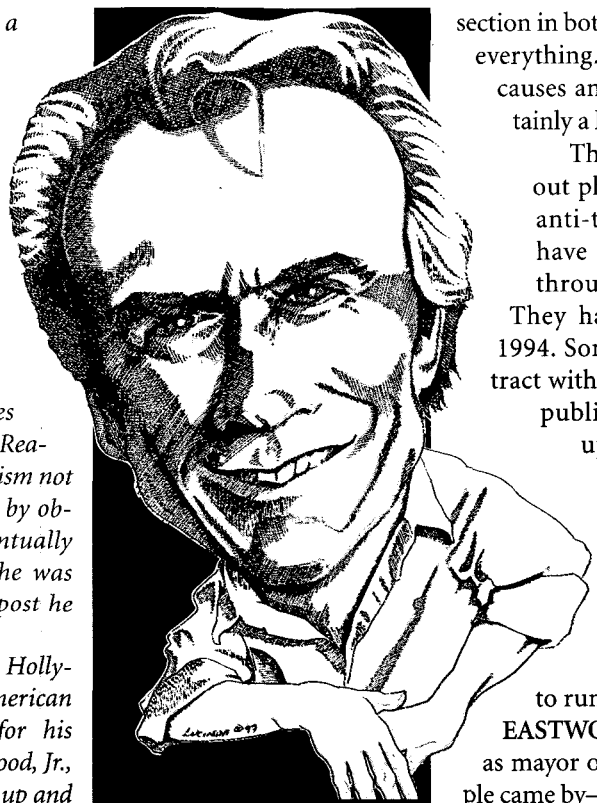
Clint Eastwood

The first year Clint Eastwood was named a top-ten box office star (in 1968), he was among the likes of Elizabeth Taylor, Julie Andrews, and Dean Martin—names that have long since faded from theater marquees. Yet Eastwood not only endures as an actor today, but has added additional feathers to his cap as a director.

Eastwood is a rarity in another respect, too: he's a Republican in an industry dominated by liberal Democrats. Like his one-time Hollywood colleagues John Wayne, Jimmy Stewart, and Ronald Reagan, Eastwood came to his quiet conservatism not through study of political philosophy but by observing life. Like Reagan, Eastwood eventually felt called into politics, when in 1986 he was elected mayor of Carmel, California, a post he kept for one term.

Eastwood is one of very few in today's Hollywood with a blue-collar, traditional American background, which perhaps accounts for his resounding popularity. Born Clinton Eastwood, Jr., in San Francisco in 1930, his family moved up and down the California coastline, struggling to make ends meet, during the Depression. Drafted into the Army in 1951, he later attended L.A. City College.

Running through many of Eastwood's pictures is the theme of an independent American man dealing with the damage and confusion wrought by post-World War II liberalism. Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil, *Eastwood's latest picture as a director, has just opened.* TAE *contributor John Meroney caught up with Eastwood while he was putting the finishing touches on the film at the Warner Bros. studios in Burbank, California.*



You want someone who's not afraid to say, "Okay, this may not follow the polls, but this is what I believe."

TAE: When did you become a Republican?
EASTWOOD: The first time I ever voted. I was enthusiastic about Eisenhower. But today both parties are now so melded in philosophy. There's a conservative, moderate, and a liberal section in both parties. Clinton has undermined everything. He's taken all the Republican causes and made them his causes. Or certainly a lot of them.

The Republicans have probably won out philosophically—now everybody's anti-tax. But I think the Republicans have been guilty of not following through on some of their promises. They had real momentum going after 1994. Some people make fun of the Contract with America, but the plain fact is the public voted it in. I think not to live up to it, to every aspect of it, is a bad thing.

TAE: Have they caused you to consider changing parties?
EASTWOOD: Oh, no, no. Absolutely not.
TAE: Were you ever approached by Republican officials to run for office?
EASTWOOD: Well, I was when I held office as mayor of Carmel, California. Several people came by—Bob Dole was one. They thought, "The President is Ronald Reagan, a former actor, maybe Clint Eastwood's going to do something like that." Quite a few people asked, "What about state senate or governor or something?" And I said, "No, you've got me confused with someone else. I'm interested in my own community, and I'm interested in running on that basis, but I don't have any other ambitions at this time."
TAE: Speaking of politicians, your 1997 movie, "Absolute Power," was all about a corrupt president. You had to think in making that film that audiences would naturally make comparisons between your fictional president and the man who's really in the Oval Office.
EASTWOOD: Well, it wasn't meant that way. It's strictly a fictional story. It wasn't patterned after anything the current president has done–at least I don't *think* so. *(laughs)*

Illustration by Lucinda S. Levine

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TAE: Now that you've had your own experience as a politician up in Carmel, do you understand where they're coming from?

EASTWOOD: Well, I can understand enough that I wouldn't want to be more involved with it. Carmel's government is non-partisan so we didn't have the bickering. It was strictly small and local, but the problems are pretty much the same as on a larger scale.

TAE: I'm told that even though you were a shoo-in, you decided to get a political consultant, your own version of Dick Morris, and that he said you needed to have lunch with everybody in town.

EASTWOOD: Well, it had to be done as a grassroots thing. In a town where you've only got four thousand people, you have to get out there and be known. You go around to teas with ten, twenty, a hundred people sometimes, and talk about different subjects. I must say, it was fun. The more you talk the more you learn how you feel about things, though I had some definite ideas before I came in there.

TAE: How would you describe your political philosophy as mayor?

EASTWOOD: I was for moderation and fairness. It's an older community, and sometimes they lose their sense of humor about life and about themselves. I tried to get away from the mentality of wanting to punish people all the time. To give you an example, a lot of people have a tiny cottage behind their houses we call a "second kitchen." They've been there for years, and it's sort of a tradition. When I came in, everybody was trying to force those out—"We're going to find out who has an extra toilet, shut them down." I said, "Just leave everybody alone. Get off their cases." I remember once, we were standing in somebody's garage and the person wanted to change the roof. The house happened to be right next to the garage of the next house and the city administrator's staff said, "Well, if he changes the roof, we're going to have to make it conform to current setbacks which means he has to move the garage." I said, "What the hell am I doing standing in somebody's garage for heaven's sakes? The guy's trying to make his house look better, to make it leak-proof. And if a person's trying to fix up his house, I think you would want to reward him, not make things harder." That's the kind of mentality that I tried to lighten.

TAE: If Bill Clinton or Newt Gingrich, both of whom have their PR problems, came to Clint Eastwood and said, "You know how to communicate with audiences, what do we need to do?" what advice would they get?

EASTWOOD: I think Clinton communicates fine, I just think that he's perceived as not very decisive on certain issues. I would like to see a person say, "This is the way I feel about something." What worries me is that if you run the country by just polling people you're not going to make solid decisions. You want someone who's not afraid to say, "Okay, this may not follow the polls, but this is what I believe." Since Clinton's not reelectable, he especially should be doing that. One of the problems in our country is that after an election, you have about a year or so in which you're free to make decisions. After that, you've got to kiss rings to become president again. Maybe it should be a six-year term—one time only—so you can get in and do the job. Then bail.

TAE: What about Gingrich?

EASTWOOD: He went through a period where he was seen too much making too many comments. He's a very intelligent guy. I heard him a year or so ago and he can give interesting speeches.

One of my political peeves now is that the whole legal system is dominating politics. The trial lawyers are out of control. In the Contract with America, the Republicans talked about tort reform and refining our legal system. But Congress is never going to do it because they're all lawyers themselves—both sides of the aisle, including the President and his wife.

Former President Carter ran on the basis of "I'm not a lawyer, I'm a small businessman," and that appealed to people. Now the legal system is driving everything. Reagan and Carter were non-lawyers. I don't know if it made them better presidents, but at least it gave them some feeling of the common man and woman on the street.

TAE: There's been all this legal wrangling over silicone breast implants. Hollywood knows a little bit about that.

EASTWOOD: Oh, what a joke. We've seen the jury system in real disarray where they give away zillions of dollars to somebody. Why should you put Dow Corning into bankruptcy? Women who've had mastectomies may need some sort of implant, but it's all disappearing based upon a few people who may have had some misfortune. It's all the legal system playing a game.

Just like the tobacco thing—another big joke. The tobacco industry is the whipping boy right now, but there's a lot of stuff that's unhealthy for you. I agree that they shouldn't have smoking in restaurants or bars. I don't like smoking, I never have smoked. I've done it in movies, but I don't

I've done everything. I dug ditches, bailed hay, cut timber. I dug swimming pools and worked as a part time actor, just thinking about getting *any* job. That's still the basis behind the American dream.

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really enjoy it or like it. I certainly don't like sitting next to somebody who's blowing smoke in my face. But if a guy steps out in a field and smokes a cigarette, that's his own damn business.

TAE: Last summer, Hillary Clinton singled out the Julia Roberts film, "My Best Friend's Wedding," because in several key scenes Roberts is puffing on Marlboros. Mrs. Clinton suggested that Hollywood ban cigarettes from movies. What do you think?

EASTWOOD: That's just the way Julia Roberts saw the character. Cigarettes kill people, but so does booze and fast food. The President— who likes his hamburgers—is sitting there with his cholesterol. Nobody bans that kind of food, why not? Maybe I'm being rebellious, but it's just a whipping boy of politicians. And a petty issue.

TAE: You grew up during an era when there were larger-than-life public figures like Douglas MacArthur, Ike, Winston Churchill, John Wayne, Gary Cooper, James Stewart.

EASTWOOD: Yeah. I remember them all. That's how old I am. *(laughs)* They were all fiercely independent. I'm sure if somebody told Humphrey Bogart to stop smoking he'd have told them where to go. That was the Bogart we loved. You don't seem to have people taking that kind of a position today.

TAE: Speaking of Duke Wayne, didn't you try to get him involved in one of your films?

EASTWOOD: I gave him a piece of material that I thought had potential for us to do as a younger guy and an older guy. He wrote me back critical of it. He had seen *High Plains Drifter,* and he didn't think that represented Americana like *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* and other John Ford westerns. And I never answered him.

TAE: Did you ever discuss westerns with him?

EASTWOOD: Well, I talked with him about some films that he'd done that I liked, and he liked a lot of my films. But that particular one stuck in his craw because it was a little bit too "nouveau." I don't think he liked the Sergio Leone ones either. He didn't like anything that distorted the image of the West and America that he had helped build up.

TAE: Did you ever read that notorious interview where Wayne talked about all sorts of political things?

EASTWOOD: Yeah. Well, you know he was a big conservative. I don't know what a conservative is other than somebody who's maybe fiscally frugal or thoughtful. And I don't know what a liberal is other than somebody who believes in equality. I've always said I like the libertarian thing of "Let's leave everybody alone and let's just quit meddling." I do believe in less government, non-meddling government.

If you go to most people who are self-made and ask them what their political philosophy is, usually they're a little more conservative than people who had a better start.

TAE: Tell me about the impact of some of the public figures you grew up with.

EASTWOOD: The first president I remember was Roosevelt. You had Movietone news and stuff like that. But you didn't have a visual image, except what was in the paper. Occasionally the president would make an address, but you didn't have the over-exposure that you have now.

I think partly because of that presidents were more popular. They had a bigger-than-life quality, much like a movie star, because you didn't see them all the time. When they came on it meant something.

The reason I became a Republican is because Eisenhower was running. A hero from World War II, a charismatic individual, a military man, a non-attorney—*even then I liked that!* I was a very young person voting for the first time.

A lot of people joke that a conservative is a liberal who's made his first $100,000 and then decides, wait a second, I want to save this, why are they taxing it away? Today the country's in kind of a turmoil over taxing. Being raised in the thirties, watching my parents work hard to make ends meet, with jobs scarce, and then the war years—it tends to make a person a little more fiscally conscious than if you've been born into a wealthier family. You know, if you go to most people who are self-made and ask them what their political philosophy is, usually they're a little more conservative than people who had a better start.

TAE: You had a number of jobs before your acting career kicked in.

EASTWOOD: I've done everything. I dug ditches, bailed hay, cut timber. I dug swimming pools and worked as a part-time actor, just thinking about getting *any* job.

TAE: And you would call your agent between pools to see whether you had any offers.

EASTWOOD: Yeah, absolutely. And we didn't have cellular! We had to go down and put a nickel in at the local pharmacy. I was just trying to make a living.

That's still the basis behind the American dream. My father used to say, "You've got to go out and earn it. If you're working for someone, show him you can do it the best. Make yourself invaluable to the company. Make it so that you're irreplaceable. Show people what you can do." I'd say, "I don't know what I can do." *(laughs)*

TAE: We've just recently heard all these horror stories about everyday Americans falling victim to the IRS.

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EASTWOOD: Yeah, oh, yeah. Who are taxes punishing all this time? It's the middle-class. And even though politicians love to campaign and talk about what they want to do for the underprivileged and the poor, who do they end up screwing all the time? It's the underprivileged and the poor.

For example, in California, we had terrible emissions laws. If your car was a certain age, it was through. It could cost thousands to make an older car drivable. And some lady who's a domestic, a gardener, a construction worker—they're dead. It doesn't bother the wealthy person, who says, "Trash it, we'll get a new one." Recently, our state has gone back and reexamined this, partly thanks to Bill Wattenberg, a KGO talk-show host, and a few others who went to Sacramento and screamed bloody murder at the politicians.

TAE: You got a taste of politics when *Dirty Harry* came out in 1971.

EASTWOOD: There were some reviewers who thought it was a "right-wing fantasy."

TAE: Pauline Kael of the *New Yorker* wrote that famous review where she called the picture "deeply immoral" and said the "action genre has always had a fascist potential and it has finally surfaced."

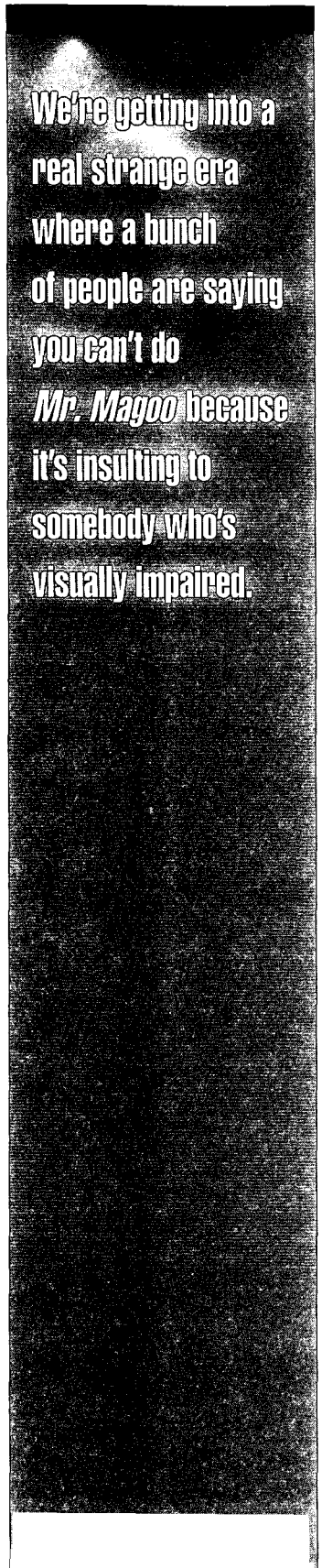
EASTWOOD: I never resented that so much. Hell, she was finding her way to be famous. If you become famous by throwing acid or shooting bullets, then that's okay as long as you're honest about it. Just don't try to fool anybody into thinking you're writing the great American literary essay.

TAE: The critic Richard Schickel said that when you ask the bank robber in *Dirty Harry*, "Do you feel lucky?," that was "the transformative moment" in which a "star established his superstardom." When you're making those films, do you ever have a sense of which lines are going to be favorites, or even immortalized?

EASTWOOD: You never really know. When I made *Sudden Impact* years later I thought "Go ahead, make my day" might be all right, but I didn't realize it would be so big. I thought maybe "Smith and Wesson and me" might be the line.

TAE: Did you have any advance warning that Reagan was going to use "make my day" in a speech?

EASTWOOD: Everybody used it. I remember playing in a golf tournament in February, and the picture had just come out in December. Everybody was yelling out of the crowd, "Hey, make my day." Some lady rented a plane to tow a banner that said, "Clint, make my day. Kathy."



By the end of the three-day tournament I was sick of it.

I'll go to events and people will say, "Will you get up and say that line?" I say, "No. Once is plenty."

TAE: Tell us about your periodic phone conversations with Reagan when he was president.

EASTWOOD: Oh, I talked to him a few times. One time it was about the issue of MIAs and POWs from the Vietnam War. There was a group of people who came to me and argued that the government had been pretty complacent in searching for MIAs. I didn't know if these guys were straight shooters, but they made a pretty compelling argument that maybe not enough had been done. I was a draftee myself, and if there's one American held against his will anywhere in the world, I'd certainly go the whole limit for him.

I talked to Reagan and said, "This looks bad if there's any validity to it. I think it warrants the most high priority investigation if there really is something." So I gave that group some dough to try to go on an excursion. I never even heard from them after that. They just kind of disappeared. Reagan wanted me briefed because word was getting out I had helped finance this whole deal; so he put me in touch with Colonel Dick Childress who informed me that what the government was doing about the MIAs wasn't public knowledge.

TAE: What was your impression of Clinton after meeting him?

EASTWOOD: I just met him briefly at a golf tournament. He seemed like a very nice, charming guy. He knows how to look you right in the eye and give you all the political stuff. But they all do that.

TAE: One of the criticisms of the book *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*, which you've just filmed, is its moral relativity. Murderers and people who go into graveyards and practice voodoo at midnight sit side by side with leading citizens of Savannah. They're presented almost on the same level as equally eccentric.

EASTWOOD: I don't know why a person would find that negative. That's what made the book work. The book has been on the bestseller list for two years based upon the fact that you're seeing this collage of people.

TAE: Did you have to be careful not to let the sexual aspects of the story dominate the film?

EASTWOOD: I'm not trying to capitalize on them to make this movie. The drag queen is played by the real drag queen. John Cusack has most of the scenes with her, and they're terrific

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together. The murder takes place, but if it had been a heterosexual couple and then a murder, it probably would hold pretty much the same. When I got down to Savannah I found that people didn't really think much about the sex. People suspected that Jim Williams might have been gay, but nobody thought too much about it.

TAE: What would Inspector Harry Callahan say about this project?

EASTWOOD: *(laughs)* I think he'd just try to solve the case or protect the innocent. You know, there was a joke in *Dirty Harry* where his colleague says, "Harry hates everybody" and then names off every race and religion there is. It was meant to be facetious. I think he'd like people based upon whether they're good people. But if they're outside the law, I'm sure he wouldn't like them. He wouldn't like what they're standing for.

TAE: The South has long been ridiculed by Hollywood.

EASTWOOD: Oh, yeah, rubes, hillbillies. Or in the serious vein, racists, hangings. All stereotypes.

TAE: Have you made a conscious effort to avoid that in this story?

EASTWOOD: I would like to think that there are not clichés of the South. I wanted to do something different. We're not telling a story of the stereotypical South.

TAE: Some on the Right who look to you as a conservative icon say Clint Eastwood made *Unforgiven,* promoting the idea that there's little difference between good guys and bad guys. Then *The Bridges of Madison County*, a romance about a wife who has an affair. Not exactly a conservative thing. And now he's made a picture about a homosexual killing in Savannah. What's happening to Clint Eastwood?

EASTWOOD: The guy's lost his mind! *(laughs)* I have no idea.

TAE: The same guy who made westerns and Dirty Harry movies all those years.

EASTWOOD: Yeah. Well, you do things at different times. You make what you feel like at the time. If somebody comes along with a great script and says, "Hey, this is a classic cop story with a couple of new twists and a new approach," I'd love to try that. But these two movies just happen to be the most interesting stories I've found recently. The last thing I want to do is get into repeating and imitating myself. The worst thing you can do is start trying to do in your sixties what you did in your forties. You really have to move onward.

TAE: Critics, though, will say, "He used to be like Duke Wayne and those older guys. But then he makes *The Bridges of Madison County* and *Midnight*—he's become part of that 'new Hollywood' crowd out there. What happened to the old Clint Eastwood?"

EASTWOOD: *(laughs)* I can't make new old movies. It might be fun, but I've got to keep branching out. Besides, in one sense *Midnight* is more "old Hollywood." It's driven by story and character rather than the special effects that dominate the "new Hollywood." This is a story about people. I like to see real people in films.

TAE: How do you respond to the criticism that with all the sex, violence, and filthy language in films, Hollywood really needs to clean up its act?

EASTWOOD: There's always been good and bad movies. One thing about a movie, you can get up and leave. Yeah, I may agree with that criticism where a movie is too violent or gruesome. I was a big supporter of the rating system when it came in, but I must say I'm its biggest critic now. I've had pictures where they get rated R because you say one or two words. Some other R picture comes along and they use the same dialogue a hundred times and they'll kill about 500 people and feature a couple of blood-lettings and throat-slashings—we're in the same category as that?

Also, we're getting into a real strange era where a bunch of people are saying you can't do Mr. Magoo because it's insulting to somebody who's visually impaired. Does that mean it's insulting to everybody who wears glasses on this planet, myself included? Somebody who walks into walls like the Marx Brothers—is that making fun of people who are imbeciles? We're getting into a stage now where you can't do anything.

TAE: Hollywood has a tendency to stereotype religion in films and TV. Often people are either religious fanatics or corrupt priests. Are you sensitive to that criticism as a filmmaker and as an actor?

EASTWOOD: Well, I've done pictures like *Pale Rider* which had religious overtones, and I enjoy films that do that. I think in the old days, religion was stereotyped in other ways. All the priests were made out as very sweet guys.

TAE: *Pale Rider* is in fact one of your most moving films. It has many religious themes and presents them in a positive light. Your character is known as "The Preacher" but who exactly is he?

EASTWOOD: He represents somebody who comes along maybe in answer to a prayer or a wish. He's sort of an ethical character who preaches morality and a very early-American ideal at a time when people are troubled. "Hard work and effort will win out. Defend yourself. Organize." In *High Plains Drifter*, it's the same thing. A guy comes to town and he organizes the town to defend itself. When he says, "I'm leaving," the people say, "Wait a minute, you can't." Then they crumble without him.

TAE: You once said that your movie *Bronco Billy* defined some of your beliefs. How so?

EASTWOOD: There were several beautifully naïve things about it. It's about a guy who's still believing in all the traditional American things. He's going around with this obsolete wild west show and the idealistic belief that he could start a ranch to benefit underprivileged kids. There was a sweetness about it—especially coming as it did in the 1970s, at the height of our cynicism about America.

TAE: In your film *Magnum Force* you used the famous line: "A man's got to know his limitations." In choosing films to make as a director over the last few years, you seem to have accepted very few limitations in terms of the type of stories you do.

EASTWOOD: Either that or I'm just losing my ability to know my limitations. *(laughs)*

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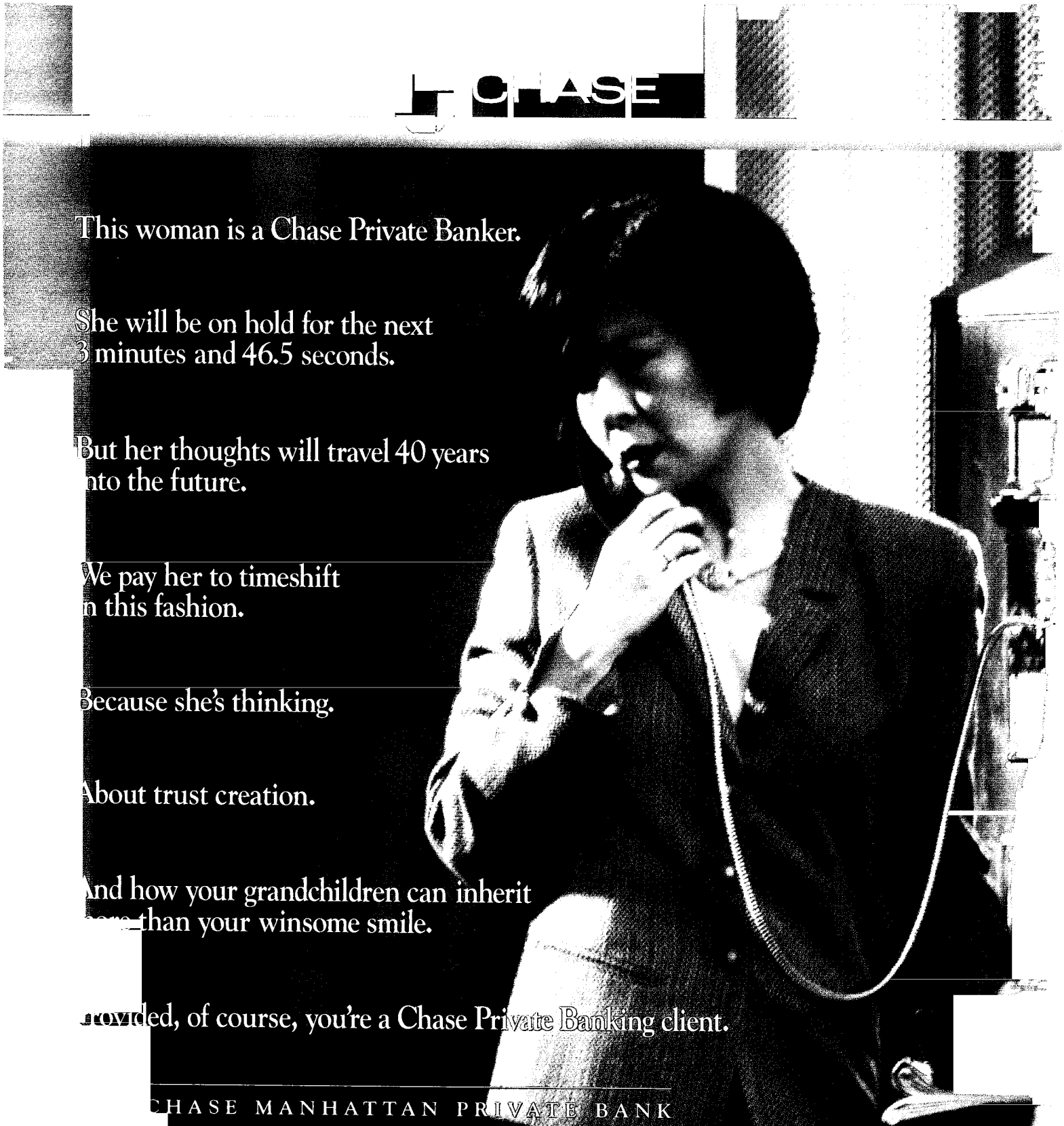

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THE YEAR IN REVIEW

Clockwise from top left: Buena Vista/Shooting Star; AP Photo/Dennis Cook; AP Photo/POOL; AP Photo/Steve Nesius

When TAE *invited three of the country's most caustic wits to look back over the year 1997, eyes rolled, stilettos flashed, and axes swung all around the table. Conservative humorist* ***P. J. O'Rourke*** *(foreign affairs correspondent for* Rolling Stone*) was joined by British radical* ***Christopher Hitchens*** *(columnist for* The Nation *and* Vanity Fair*) and commentator* ***Kate O'Beirne*** *(Washington editor of* National Review*). Senior editor Scott Walter supplied the questions.*

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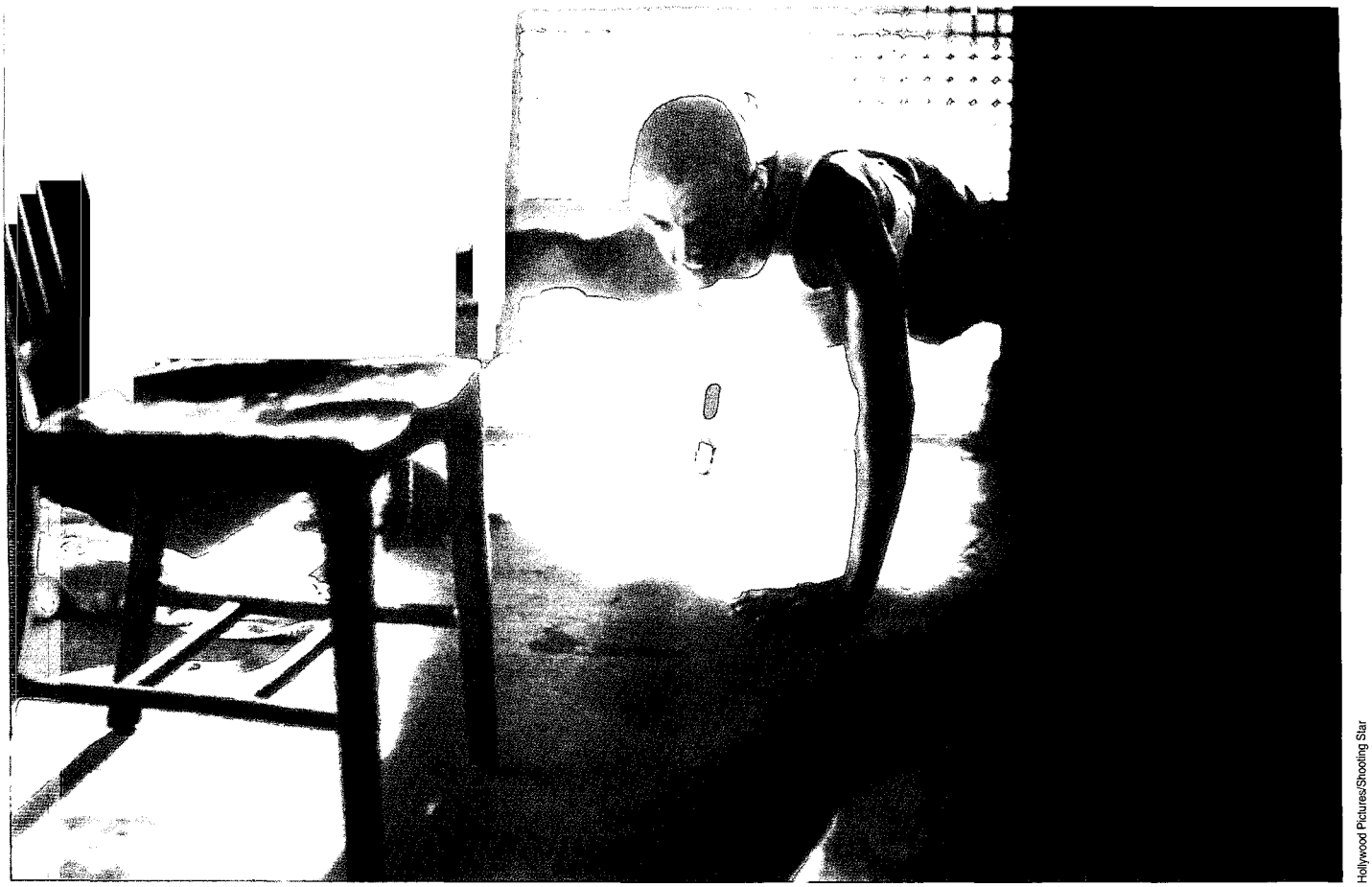

Hollywood Pictures/Shooting Star

TAE: First, the most important thing to happen this past year: Do you favor or oppose the decision to allow Miss America contestants to wear two-piece bikinis?
MR. O'ROURKE: They should be naked.
MS. O'BEIRNE: I'm for choice. As long as the girls get to decide what they want to wear.
TAE: Three out of five Americans now tell pollsters it's possible to win the presidency without breaking the law. Are they right?
O'ROURKE: I would guess not. It's probably hard to raise enough money to run without tripping over something.
MR. HITCHENS: A classic definition of a totalitarian society is one where it's impossible to obey the law because you can always be found guilty of something.
O'ROURKE: We are drifting into a situation where it's very hard to fully obey the law. You are now required to wear your seat belt in the back seat of a taxi in Washington—if you can find it.
HITCHENS: Still, I don't want this translating into self-pity among the political class so they can say, "We tried to obey the laws, but they're too complicated." I won't have it said that they broke a law not knowing what they were doing, or that it was an obscure law.
O'ROURKE: No, because they're the *only* ones who understand them. They wrote them.
HITCHENS: With luck the campaign finance scandals will lead to what everyone says they're afraid of—cynicism about politics. I say, fine, let's have lots more. We would not want a society where there was no cynicism about politics.
O'ROURKE: More damage has certainly been done by sincere belief in politics than by cynicism about politics. That's a testable proposition in the twentieth century.
TAE: Speaking of cynicism, is anyone cynical about the year's media frenzies?
O'ROURKE: I used to watch "Family Feud," and I thought I had my finger on the pulse of the American public. But Diana's death—what was that about?
HITCHENS: For me, the big mystery was the JonBenet Ramsey murder case. I didn't care. But then I cracked and read a piece by my friend Ann Louise Bardach in *Vanity Fair*. Now I'm ready to go out on the streets about it. I mean, Daddy Dearest. And incompetence that makes the LAPD look absolutely professional.
TAE: Are the media different from the paparazzi?
HITCHENS: The sainted Mrs. Graham, owner of the *Washington Post,* appeared on television the morning after Princess Diana's death to say, "These people are not members of our profession."
O'ROURKE: Which is absolute crap.
HITCHENS: She's also the owner of *Newsweek*, which used many of the photographers who were rounded up, wrongfully in my opinion, by the Paris police. Those guys were just left to rot. What interests me is, Where are the crash pictures? I'd like to see them. Why has the free market not yet managed to bring them to me?
TAE: It seems as if every week a new television news-magazine show is launched. Why are people obsessed with looking at real life on the TV screen?
O'BEIRNE: They're cheap shows to produce. Maybe all the cop and lawyer shows tracking real cases show a failure of imagination on the part of Hollywood.
HITCHENS: There's another sense in which they're cheap: There's minimal risk that you'll offend anybody—except anyone who has good taste. Len Downie, executive editor of the *Wash-*

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ington Post, has said his ideal front-page story is a really good weather story. A proper hurricane or amazing snowdrift. You can't possibly make enemies that way.

O'ROURKE: If you do too many stories about financial chicanery where the people happen to be Jewish, or too many stories about violence with people who happen to be black, or too many stories about drug dealing where the people happen to be Hispanic, you might produce a cumulative offense.

TAE: Who is most likely to cheat at cards, Clinton or Gore? Americans said Clinton by 42 to 15 percent.

HITCHENS: The 15 are the sort who make three-card monte possible. Without the 15 percent, it wouldn't be true that there was one born every minute.

O'ROURKE: Gore would be more likely to pull a gun on you than cheat you. I come from generations of used-car salesmen, and the minute I laid eyes on Clinton I said, God bless him. If we had had him at O'Rourke Buick, I would be way too rich to be doing this for a living.

TAE: Clinton watched the movie *Air Force One* over and over. What does that mean?

O'ROURKE: In your dreams, Bill!

O'BEIRNE: It means he has time to answer Paula Jones' charges.

TAE: What do you make of recent efforts by writers like Stephen Moore and Dinesh D'Souza to revise the history of the supposedly benighted Reagan years?

HITCHENS: Against what is this a revision? Reagan got a Niagara of uncritical publicity.

O'BEIRNE: The press still talks about the Reagan deficits.

HITCHENS: Should the deficit have no name?

O'BEIRNE: I call it the Tip O'Neill-George Mitchell deficit.

O'ROURKE: Compared to the Clintons, Reagan is living proof that a Republican with half a brain is better than a Democrat with two.

HITCHENS: What interests me about the Reagan revisionism of the political kind is that it comes at the same time as the medical revisionism, which is pushing back the date on which he may have been suffering from a debilitating mental condition. He must have had it quite bad while he was President: what we now call early onset. Could he have been like the drunk who got across the eight-lane highway—Russia—that he could never have been sober?

TAE: The *Wall Street Journal* recently had an ad for Jerry Garcia postage stamps from Tanzania. What does this say about '60s nostalgia?

HITCHENS: That it's a major part of the Tanzanian economy. Perhaps Congressman Kasich, a Garcia fan, can book his passage to Dar es Salaam and lick and gum away with the best of them.

O'ROURKE: Bob Marley is very popular in Dar es Salaam, Jerry Garcia rather less so.

TAE: P.J., you and Hillary are in the first class of baby boomers, who turn 50 this year.

O'ROURKE: Between the two of us, we cover all the bases. I who can't remember and she who can't forget.

HITCHENS: It would be almost better, but not quite, to periodize human history by the reigns of kings or Presidents than by decade. It's so seldom that a decade will make any sense. The 1960s was one of the first decades that was no longer characterized as Edwardian, Victorian, Georgian....

O'ROURKE: Eisenhowerian.

TAE: What do you make of kids today?

O'ROURKE: I just came back from Roanoke College in Virginia, and I can say one thing: Kids are damned tall. They seemed perfectly nice, well-adjusted—the occasional nose ring, but you can never account for teenage fads.

HITCHENS: I think they behave quite well. I just spent three months teaching in Pittsburgh: You have the honor of addressing the Andrew W. Mellon Professor of English.

O'ROURKE: Somebody's rolling in his grave.

HITCHENS: I found they were humorous and curious. The only cliché I found to be true was their ignorance. I don't know how they got to a university knowing as little as they do. And when I told them, they were angry: Why is this the first time we've been taught this? In a journalism class, they should have heard of Thomas Paine or Frederick Douglass, or Mark Twain by now.

O'ROURKE: A Vassar graduate who's a *Rolling Stone* fact-checker, 24-year-old girl, asked me who Mao was.

HITCHENS: It's like the thing said by Father Mowbray in *Brideshead Revisited:* You used to know how ignorant people were; you could test. Now you don't. It's bottomless, random, nihilistic.

O'ROURKE: The American public schools got busy after World War II teaching absolutely everything except the things that need to be taught. There was no end of hygiene classes, and gym was big in my day.

O'BEIRNE: Now it's only gym for girls.

O'ROURKE: Yes, let the boys eat Big Macs and go flabby. I had not been around a bunch of Americans for four or five months—I live in New Hampshire in a town of 200 people—and I was driving down to Washington and stopped at a rest area and couldn't believe how fat people were.

HITCHENS: Rightly they are called the masses. V.S. Naipaul says that India is not a very subtle country; the rich are very fat, and the poor are very thin. America is nearly the other way around.

TAE: Social x-rays at the top.

HITCHENS: Have you been to Disneyland lately? People can't get through the turnstiles.

O'BEIRNE: And they carry food on their belts because they might be out of range of something to eat or drink.

TAE: How about the year's bests and worsts.

HITCHENS: There's a book by a woman named Susan Meisalis who proves that winning a MacArthur Fellowship doesn't mean you just vanish. She spent five or six years producing a history of the Kurdish people in photograph and text. It's so beautiful it's a work of art. The worst book is Paul Johnson's *History of the American People:* a crude, idiotic mistake, and an abuse of the hospitality of this country.

TAE: What about Anita Hill's *Speaking Truth to Power*?

O'ROURKE: I reviewed that. I said if you are a supporter of Anita Hill, buy this so she'll get her royalties and then throw it away.

O'BEIRNE: Ambrose Evans-Pritchard in *The Secret Life of Bill Clinton* speaks truth to power more than Anita Hill.

TAE: Most despicable despot of 1997?

HITCHENS: The "Dear Leader" of North Korea, who, on top of

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everything else, has now established the idea of hereditary monarchy on the Korean peninsula—combining the worst of communism with the worst of monarchy. He presented it as an awesome personal burden, just the way people talk about monarchy in the West—"Oh, I wouldn't have that job." You're a despot if you can make your subjects feel sorry for you.

O'ROURKE: I'm not sure this fellow's a bad guy, but I'm very interested in the fact that the current leader of Albania, where I recently visited, is named Fatos Nano, and that he escaped from jail to run for office, which certainly gives him some distinction. By the way, I was in Hong Kong when *Rolling Stone* called me and said, "While you're over there, would you go to Albania?" *While I'm over here?* Try 5,000 miles away.

But I'd also like to nominate the Chinese for large-scale bad behavior. Not because of Tibet or anything fashionable, but because of what Christopher was talking about: they have total state control of every aspect of life, and all the problems of capitalism on top of it. The term for this is corporate fascism.

HITCHENS: Ever since we were at the Second Thoughts conference in 1987, I've known that one day P.J. and I would have this convergence. The moment just occurred.

O'ROURKE: We do not have a convergence. There is an overlap.

HITCHENS: I'm not trying to get touchy, let alone feely.

TAE: Dimmest bulb in Congress?

O'BEIRNE: Congressman Sheila Jackson Lee from Texas, who visited the Mars Pathfinder Mission Center and wondered whether or not the rover caught a picture of the flag Neil Armstrong had left. She's on the Science Committee, by the way.

HITCHENS: Joe Kennedy. It's a miracle he can find his way unaided to the Hill, though of course he never *has* had to find his way unaided. His speech in support of the flag-burning amendment would qualify in any anthology of the challenged. I keeping thinking, as with all Kennedys, how long, O Lord, how long?

O'ROURKE: The Kennedys actually did me a favor. I have a very Catholic father-in-law and a pretty Catholic wife, and I am not Catholic. Even though I was previously married for about 15 minutes in a civil ceremony to someone who was Jewish, I have to get an annulment in order to have our baby baptized, because the Catholic Church in America recognizes all marriages, presumably including Episcopalian lesbian pet marriages. I complained to my father-in-law, "Do you know what I have to go through? Getting friends to write letters about how my marriage was ill-considered and so on. Meanwhile the Kennedys have a vending machine; they have an 800-number where they get annulments." He was forced to take my point. Meanwhile, all this trouble so my first wife and I do not have to spend eternity in heaven.

O'BEIRNE: You're only married in the afterlife when you're Mormon, P.J.

O'ROURKE: You mean we can play around in heaven?

O'BEIRNE: How could it be heaven?

O'ROURKE: You're so right. What was I thinking?

TAE: Most annoying person in public life?

O'BEIRNE: Rob Reiner. Do we really need to hear from Meathead on brain development?

O'ROURKE: The convergence of the Diana funeral, the mound of teddy bears, and Promise Keepers on the Mall. If you have to gather with 750,000 other men on the Mall to say that you're the man of the house, you're not the man of the house.

O'BEIRNE: I just hate it when men hug and feel things. I don't want them feeling anything.

HITCHENS: Are you ready for Couples '98? The next nothing march. People say nothing, ask nothing, demand nothing.

O'ROURKE: This is Loser Land. Diana was a loser icon. Women all over the world were saying, She wasn't very bright; I'm not very bright. She didn't know anything; I don't know anything. She didn't do much with her life; I don't do much with my life. She made a huge mark on society; I make a huge mark on society. She lived silly and died silly, and we're going to leave a huge mound of teddy bears in front of her house.

O'BEIRNE: To understand the women's reaction, go back to high school: She's beautiful, she's rich, and she's deeply unhappy. Meanwhile you're thinking, If I were beautiful, thin, and rich, I'd be full of delight. Here's somebody with all that and she's deeply unhappy. It's irresistible.

TAE: What about the women in the military crises? Kate wrote of Demi Moore's movie *G.I. Jane,* "Hollywood celebrates a woman's debasement as a triumph of women's equality."

O'BEIRNE: The most telling line about *G.I. Jane* was Bill Clinton's. The Navy refused to cooperate, so Demi Moore called the White House trying to have the President intervene. Mike McCurry summarized that Clinton wouldn't have minded talking to her about the movie because he understood she was going to appear in it in a wetsuit. As heads are rolling in the services for harassment, the commander-in-chief is making Demi Moore wetsuit jokes.

HITCHENS: That shows how unserious he is. I sometimes wonder why people on the Right hate Clinton so. Apart from his low character and morals and scummy methods, what has Bill Clinton actually done to disturb their sleep?

O'BEIRNE: I think the Right has more idealistic, corny notions about the quality of a president.

HITCHENS: On corny notions, no one can beat the liberals.

O'ROURKE: Bill Clinton represents the '60s to a lot of conservatives, especially the self-indulgence, self-importance, and sloppiness.

HITCHENS: But Gingrich is a '60s kid as well, without having any ideological courage.

O'BEIRNE: And conservatives are divided about him.

O'ROURKE: He gets into that touchy-feely stuff.

O'BEIRNE: For Clinton, Oklahoma City was the perfect moment. Oklahoma City wasn't the kind of crisis a president had to respond to. It was an Oprah moment: He felt awful and expressed our pain.

O'ROURKE: Perfect crisis for a perfect guy. And Di's death was the perfect crisis for Tony Blair. God help us if they ever get into a real crisis.

HITCHENS: George Stephanopoulos spends weekends in my apartment building because he comes down for "The Week Without David Brinkley" or whatever that TV show is now called. We had a drink around the time of the Diana business, and he said, "Hey, Tony Blair's doing brilliantly, isn't he? This is his Oklahoma City." These guys think about things that way.

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What Kind of America

By Joel Kotkin and David Friedman

What sort of America will Generation Xers inherit as they enter our leadership ranks over the next decade or two? The conventional view is that the country is entering an era of champagne and roses. This summer *Wired,* a magazine of giddy '90s sensibilities, stridently proclaimed: "We're facing 25 years of prosperity, freedom, and a better environment for the whole world. You got a problem with that?"

Well, yes, we do. For two decades your co-authors have been refuting claims that U.S. technology was lagging, that American society was unhealthy, that we were about to be eclipsed by Japan or a united Europe. Those declinist views, so popular during the 1970s and '80s, foolishly overlooked American dynamism—our entrepreneurialism, immigration successes, and political adaptability—which eventually disproved the naysayers.

Today, however, the phony tale of American decline has given way to the Nirvana myth of an America that can do no wrong. Underneath this bewildering shift in elite opinion lies the egocentric baby boomers' talent for misperceiving the world around them.

After the 1960s social revolution so loudly cherished by some baby boomers fizzled out, America's most spoiled generation convinced the media and academy that America was doomed. The era of abundance was over, they said, and "limits to growth" had arrived. Resources were disappearing; the environment was dying; energy was running out. Overseas competitors, directed by more far-sighted governments, were overtaking us. Everyday American workers and minorities were losing ground. The rich alone were getting richer. Only a few cold warriors like Ronald Reagan and the late Herman Kahn had the courage to resist this conventional wisdom and correctly predict a renascent United States.

Now those same liberal baby boomers who predicted American decline are enjoying the fruits of middle-aged prosperity. They're running things, own big houses, lots of cars, and are in their peak earning years. Their Age of Aquarius has mutated into a quasi-religious faith in a "new era economy" in which business cycles no longer occur, technology solves all problems, and green, politically correct capitalism is expected to transform every private desire into a personal right.

This hyper-rosy view treats current patterns as permanent and ignores real threats to prosperity. And it assumes that upticks on Wall Street, in Silicon Valley, and in certain boom towns and industries are common in America as a whole. Such views don't begin to comprehend what's occurring in average boroughs across the country.

Dear Gen Xers: Your first challenge is to sniff out the hype now emanating from the baby-boomer-dominated media. You must identify the real successes, so they can be multiplied. And you must acknowledge some truly difficult challenges ahead so you can address them more seriously than your '60s-kids parents and older siblings have. Then you will have a country that can take you and all other Americans a long way. Here are five boomer-generated myths to watch out for:

1. "The soaring stock market of the 1990s signals the dawn of broad and sustained prosperity."

The stock market's astonishing bull run has unquestionably generated great wealth for many millions of Americans. But that doesn't necessarily translate into broad-based, infinitely sustainable economic prosperity, because the stock market and the U.S. economy aren't the same thing.

While the companies that make up America's stock indexes are some of the country's best-run firms, they are representative of only a fraction of all U.S. industry. Computer makers like Hewlett-Packard, IBM, and Compaq, for instance, compose just a portion of the American "industrial machinery and equipment" sector—which itself amounts to less than 2 percent of the nation's gross domestic product.

Technology companies have been boosting productivity by an average of 9 percent per year, and because they make up 16 percent of the Standard & Poor's 500, this prosperity has been well reflected in the stock market. But keep in mind that, all told, tech firms account for just 3 percent of U.S. employment.

Other high-productivity sectors are also over-represented in stock indexes: Financial companies make up 16 percent of the S&P 500, and consumer staples firms like Procter & Gamble total 15 percent. But these two industries employ only 7 and 4 percent of all U.S. workers, respectively. Meanwhile, sectors like restaurants/food stores, services, and government—where productivity growth is running at sluggish annual rates of -0.5 percent to 1.5 percent—are vastly more important in the real economy (representing 8, 12, and 15 percent of national employment) than in the stock market (where they are 1, 1, and 0 percent of the S&P 500 respectively).

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Moreover, some of the ways America's blue-chip companies have been increasing earnings (by reducing employment, for instance, and by squeezing small-company suppliers to reduce costs) have actually reduced American job security and pay levels in the short run. Ten years ago, the S&P 500 employed 16 percent of all workers. Today, just 14 percent.

Another reason stock market expansion doesn't simply equal general prosperity: less than a quarter of Americans have substantial savings. For most people, their primary wealth is their home, and their only substantial source of income is their job.

The vocal elite inhabiting equity-sensitive areas like Manhattan, California's Bay Area, and Seattle have unequivocally benefited from the stock market boom. Across America, things look bright for well-educated, forty something professionals in fashionable suburbs. But not all Americans fit such categories.

2. "America has an insurmountable technological lead which guarantees future prosperity."

In the 1970s and '80s, boomer pundits repeatedly warned that America was falling behind in the technology race. The Japanese, Germans, or Southeast Asians were seen as ferocious tigers ready to pounce on the fat, stupid Americans. Now the same pundits portray our competitors as toothless kittens.

They ignore America's most critical future economic challenge: Our nation is building a high-tech economy for which it lacks the basic human resources. The culprits are a combination of horrendous urban public schools, misguided immigration policies, onerous regulations, corporate opportunism, and anti-blue collar sentiment that depresses technical education. According to the Information Technology Association of America, there are now 190,000 vacancies for high-tech workers. And the situation will get worse, with a million net new tech jobs expected over the coming decade, with virtually no increase in supply.

Nor do shortages exist only in fields like engineering. They extend to numerous professions, from geologists to digital animators. In today's strong economy, software studios, oil companies, aerospace firms, and other companies must often look abroad for high-end talent.

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Marketing Information Systems of Evanston, Illinois, for instance, has been hiring computer programmers in St. Petersburg, Russia. "It's difficult to find people in this country any more," explains CEO John Kennedy. "There's huge pressure on salaries. You have managers who make $50,000 a year interviewing programmers who won't work for under $65,000 or $80,000 a year." He has so many American competitors, however, that salaries in St. Petersburg rose 40 percent this year alone.

Our talent gap is fueling a shift of high-tech industries from the U.S. to places like India, Israel, Ireland, the Philippines, and even Mexico. In the early 1980s, for example, one out of 40 among Intel's employees in Malaysia was an engineer. A decade later that proportion has risen to one out of six. While America has congratulated itself with cyber-hype, our competitors have focused on producing skilled workers and engineers.

Our skills shortage is one reason computer manufacturing employment in the U.S. has fallen by 32 percent since 1984, and the foreign content of U.S. computer products rose from 42 percent to 65 percent during 1989-95.

Shortages of machinists, casters, and similar skilled workers have hobbled aerospace companies, autopart makers, and other important industries. Even in industries where a skills gap is not a problem, American companies face stiff competition ahead. European firms are suddenly spurting ahead of U.S. competitors in some sectors of digital cellular telephony, for instance. Saturn and other "premier" U.S. nameplates are cutting back car production in response to enhanced competition in the auto industry.

Despite massively unfavorable currency shifts, Japanese automakers survived the early 1990s by intensively cutting costs, redesigning products, and investing even more heavily in technology and manufacturing capabilities. Now that the yen is becoming cheaper to the dollar, they are gaining competitive advantages. In addition, the Japanese (and some European manufacturers) have set up new plants in the United States which are coming on line with very good management systems; new, flexible physical facilities; and fresh, non-union labor forces. They are building cars with fewer defects, for less money and fewer hours of labor per vehicle. As a result, U.S. auto makers have another challenging stretch ahead.

U.S. economic production will continue to suffer bottlenecks until we make fundamental reforms in our schools. As in so many areas, the roots of America's skills crisis lie with 1960s baby-boomer ideology. Meritocracy and fact-centered learning have too often been sacrificed to politically correct educational ideology and personal self-indulgence. Liberal boomer intellectuals have also stigmatized business in favor of therapeutic, regulatory, academic, or journalistic work, and they have cultivated suspicion of technology and science. As Herman Kahn observed, they even called into question the very desirability of economic growth.

And so the number of Americans trained in critical fields dropped even as college graduation rates rose. The annual number of new computer science graduates fell from a high of 50,000 in 1986, for instance, to 36,000 in 1994, while bachelor's degrees in engineering fell from 96,000 to 78,000. Mathematics grads slipped from 16,000 to 15,000. Degrees in the physical sciences tumbled from 24,000 to 18,000.

So how did America achieve its technical triumphs in the 1990s? Largely by mining the skills of its older Cold War-era engineers and by importing talent from abroad. Today one-third of the engineers in Silicon Valley and Orange County, California, come from abroad. Nearly one-fifth of all undergraduates in computer science and half of all doctoral candidates are citizens of foreign countries.

Many are refugees—from China, the former Soviet Union, Vietnam, Cuba—or their children. But our nation's ability to borrow the work ethic and knowledge of others is ebbing. The end of the Cold War has diminished skilled refugee flows, and displaced defense engineers are increasingly hard to find. Growing anti-immigrant feeling and irrational entry policies have constrained the number of highly skilled newcomers. The number of new computer scientists and mathematicians entering the country in 1996 was almost 21 percent below the 1986-94 rate.

With labor force growth now at the lowest levels in American history, demographer David Birch notes, even an economic slowdown will not solve the skills shortage. "We're getting into a situation that's permanent, though we could change it in a week by altering the immigration laws," he says. "Why do we want to keep out people we need to keep the economy growing? No one seems to realize we're running out of raw material."

3. "After decades of decay, America's cities are enjoying a remarkable revival."

"New York," proclaims the Manhattan-centric national press, "is back." Conferences are packed with journalists and real-estate developers enthusiastically describing how Cleveland's Rock 'n' Roll Museum and Jacobs Field, the Inner Harbor and Camden Yards in Baltimore, and Detroit's Renaissance Center have remade once-horrific inner cities.

Nothing better reveals the cruel hollowness of today's Nirvana syndrome than such tales of urban revival. The boomer elites may well be having a good time in tastefully decorated, well-policed urban districts, but for the most part, America's cities have continued their steady decay. In the 1980s, roughly two-thirds of all new jobs were in the suburbs rather than central cities; by the mid-1990s it reached 80 percent. As demographer Birch notes, new economic growth now occurs in an inverse relationship with inner-city proximity. In the early 1990s, for the first time in American history, nonmetropolitan job growth outpaced major metro-area growth—by almost two to one.

Many of America's urban revivals are full-blown Potemkin villages—fake façades erected to impress while hid-

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Our future prosperity is endangered by the collapse of urban schools (where one in three young Americans get educated), and the disappearance of bourgeois morality.

ing serious ugliness underneath. In Baltimore, for instance, Orioles baseball and Rouse Corporation developments please suburban Washington day-trippers, but the city's population has dropped by almost 100,000, or six percent, just since 1980. Beyond the gleaming stadia and small restored areas, surrounding neighborhoods are not healthy in cities such as Cleveland and Atlanta. In St. Louis, total employment has dropped by 28,000 in the 1990s—nearly ten percent—even as suburban areas have enjoyed 20 percent employment growth. The average incomes in cities such as Newark, Detroit, Cleveland, Buffalo, and St. Louis are now roughly half those of surrounding suburbs. By 1990, Detroit had a poverty rate of 30 percent, compared to only 6 percent in its affluent, growing suburban ring.

Similar patterns can be found in the relatively new sunbelt metropolises such as Los Angeles and Dallas. These are increasingly "donut" cities, with high vacancy rates and pervasive poverty downtown surrounded by thriving suburban commercial clusters. Vacancy rates in downtown Dallas are over 30 percent, three times the suburban average. Amidst a sustained recovery, a still-seedy downtown Los Angeles, awash in public subsidies, suffers vacancy rates around 20 percent, almost twice that of prosperous areas on the west side and the eastern San Fernando Valley. Even much-hyped Atlanta has vacancy rates well above those of the suburbs, while nearly 27 percent of the city's population lives in poverty and endures the nation's highest violent crime rate.

Potemkin village development is nowhere more acute than in New York City. Generation Xers and the rest of America can be forgiven for not realizing that America's largest city has an unemployment rate nearly twice the national average and is creating jobs much more slowly than almost anywhere else in the country. Such news rarely intrudes into the Manhattan orbit of the baby-boomer editors of *Time, Vanity Fair,* or *The New Yorker.*

Even on Wall Street there are signs of trouble, if anyone bothered to look. Employment in New York's financial services sector, the city's strongest industry, has actually fallen from 163,000 in 1987 to 150,000 today, despite the stock market boom. Wall Streeters as a class, however, now account for 18 percent of all private sector income, up from 12 percent a decade ago. To an extent unmatched in any other metropolis, New York is home to an economic elite surrounded by a stagnant larger population.

Once centers of good blue-collar jobs in manufacturing and warehousing, New York City's outer boroughs, as well as parts of Manhattan, have lost most of their commercial vitality—and disappeared from the minds of New York's elites. "Whole parts of New York no longer have an economy to speak of," notes Cooper Union historian Fred Siegel. "Whole boroughs like the Bronx and much of Brooklyn have fallen into the earth and been forgotten."

4. "America's social problems will be solved by prosperity." Perhaps nothing is crueler and more deluded than the boomer notion that their prosperity will somehow make the nation's social, moral, and racial problems disappear. "A spirit of generosity returns," Peter Schwartz and Peter Leyden claim in *Wired.* "The vast majority of Americans who see their prospects rising with the expanding economy are genuinely sympathetic to the plight of those left behind. The kinder, gentler humanitarian urge is bolstered by a cold, hard fact. The bigger the network, the better."

This Lady-Bountiful-on-the-Internet reasoning ignores the way social distance has grown throughout the current expansion. If anything, productive workers and stable families now tend to seal themselves off from the more dysfunctional parts of American society in relatively self-contained suburbs, or havens in the intermountain West or sunbelt.

Roughly 1 million native-born Americans moved from both the New York City and Los Angeles areas between 1990 and 1995. Washington, D.C., San Francisco, Chicago, Boston, and San Diego also suffered large-scale domestic out-migration. These trends are more than white-flight; middle-class minorities and even upwardly mobile immigrants have shown a marked tendency to follow affluent whites in the rush from major metropolises.

The result is a new class and ethnic segregation that could reverse, perhaps explosively, the latent opportunities created by America's recent economic uptick. In 1960, central cities housed 27 percent of America's poor, but by 1990 that figure had soared to over 42 percent. By 1990, the median income in central cities was almost 30 percent lower than in the suburbs, and the urban poverty rate was 18 percent, compared to about 8 percent in the suburbs.

The problem is not just income stratification. It's the dysfunctional culture that large cities tragically produce today. In places like "resurgent" New York, the big economic problem isn't a shortage of higher skills, it's the absence of even the most *basic* work ethic. "The majority of workers think they're doing a good job by showing up at work," Jean Zatorski, personnel manager at Pfizer's Brownsville, New York plant recently told *City Journal.* "And every last one of them is owed something."

As few as 6 percent of the New York City candidates for teller positions at Chase Manhattan get accepted, yet many of those who are selected still can't cut it. A Bronx chemical manufacturer keeps a staff five to ten percent larger than necessary to make up for absenteeism. Given these trends, it's unsurprising that in the first quarter of 1997, while the number of jobs in New York City increased by nearly 20,000, employment among city residents actually dropped by 21,000.

The collapse of urban schools (where one in three young Americans are educated) is one source of this urban economic dysfunction. By 1996, three-quarters of urban fourth graders were reading below basic skills levels; under 6 percent were

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rated proficient or advanced. "We have lost a generation," observes Carole Hoover, president of the Greater Cleveland Growth Association. "We forgot that human development and economic development are tied together."

Another problem is the disappearance of the bourgeois morality which previously led poor and near-poor Americans into the middle class. As boomer elites migrate to America's new liberal valhallas—the Seattles, Vermonts, and Portlands—they offer failed nostrums for those they leave behind: Weakened standards so that minorities and the poor will build "esteem." Political recognition for gangs and minority warlords who live off of ethnic dysfunction. A reluctance to defend order, responsible behavior, and personal accountability.

None of which will help the young Americans who are the products of broken homes and collapsed moral standards. One-third of all American children (and two-thirds of blacks) currently live in single-parent families, twice the percentage of 1970. The number of youths victimized by violent crime jumped from 79 per 1,000 in 1980 to 118 in 1994, as a new broken generation of Americans hit the streets.

Morally deficient baby boomers may feel that America's on the right track as they contemplate trends from their pine-scented homesteads. But there are other less bucolic homesteads out there. And as Bob Woodson of the National Center for Neighborhood Enterprise observes, "you can't cure something with economics when economics isn't the cause."

5. "Democratic capitalism has triumphed across the globe."

Many American elites now proclaim the dominance of democratic capitalism. But even in its U.S. homeland, a strong potential exists for a resurgence of neo-socialism.

Leaving aside the still-open question of whether China and the remnants of the Soviet Union will fully embrace markets, and unresolved debates about the convergence of Asian and Western capitalism, it is simply absurd to celebrate the triumph of the market over the state. Yes, there is an overwhelming ideological trend away from government. Yet public spending as a percentage of GDP continues to grow, not shrink, in all major countries, and state apparatuses are more powerful than ever.

Even in the U.S. there are several interests who could lead a push toward more statism. One is the American underclass, an increasingly desperate group. In New York, unions are now trying to organize welfare recipients to seek political and state succor.

A second source of resurgent neo-socialism is the public sector itself, whose unions are pressing for, and often winning, extensions of state power. In places like Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York, municipal unions have caused the city government to enact "living wage" requirements that dictate above-market benefits for city workers. Many are pushing to extend such requirements to all workers, essentially socializing the urban workforce.

Under AFL-CIO leader John Sweeney, a self-proclaimed socialist, the American labor movement is increasingly under the sway of left-wing organizers. The goals of these organizers are not the old bread-and-butter concerns of the Gompers-style unionists (like better wages or a higher standard of living); they aim at more fundamental class agitation and symbolic struggle. Backed by quasi-monopolistic institutions like our universities, the mainstream media, and the still-unreformed core of the Democratic party, the potential influence of this new Left cannot easily be dismissed.

At the same time, 1990s boomer affluence is spurring unprecedented use of bureaucratic powers to defend selfish interests, especially land-use and environmental regulations that protect the communities into which liberal elites have fled. During economic boom times, the costs of NIMBY, anti-immigrant, no-growth activism are more easily papered over. In this way, economic growth can, ironically, become a handmaiden to expansion of government's sway over economic and social life.

Regulatory bureaucracies that protect elite, suburban interests—wildlife, wetland, and environmental agencies, local planning bureaucracies, and architectural commissions—are everywhere expanding their reach. As these bureaucracies expand, many of them staffed by battle-scarred veterans of left-wing activism, they legitimate a more widespread activism. If farmers with water-filled ditches on their private property face onerous wetland regulations, why shouldn't urban stockbrokers fork over all income above a certain level to promote social equality?

Similarly, in Europe, where elite statism and regulatory intrusion are far more advanced, Thatcherite politics is now in retreat. France now has an openly socialist government with Communist coalition partners committed to make-work projects, higher minimum wages, and expanded state power. Germany will likely replace its pro-business Christian Democrat regime with a "red-green" coalition of Social Democrats and Green Party environmentalists. Communists, reformed or unabashed, have reasserted themselves throughout the former Soviet Bloc, most ominously in Russia itself. And China, without instituting democratic political reforms, is using its new economic power "to leapfrog an entire generation of weapon development," notes Stephen Blank of the Army War College. In no realistic sense is it possible to imagine today that the struggle for democratic and economic freedom around the world has been conclusively won.

Generation Xers should be prepared for a future far different from that predicted by the newly converted prophets of glee. Thankfully, everyday Americans seem more sensible than the baby-boomer elites who are today's self-appointed masters of public argument. Roughly two-thirds of respondents in a *Wall Street Journal* poll, for example, rejected the idea that sustained prosperity has been achieved so that no recession is likely in the next five years.

Just because Nirvana has yet to be attained does not mean it's time to revive the misguided whining of the recent past. But as the ancients insisted, and as only a few generations have had the chance to forget, life is hard—and likely will always be. Neither wide bandwidth nor any other miracle of cyberspace changes that reality. The starting point for improving our future must be honesty about the present—something the still-dominant, profoundly narcissistic baby-boomer elites have never achieved.

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Another View

By Ben J. Wattenberg

These days, public commentators who have been both contrarians and optimists—like Joel Kotkin, and me—have a real problem. For most of the last 30 years, it was a piece of cake: Because so much of the conventional wisdom was gloomy, being a contrarian and being an optimist were the same thing. But no more. Optimism is now mainstream. If you are a contrarian today you are a pessimist. (At least as all these too-easy labels are used.)

Forced to decide between being a counter-trend thinker and being an optimist, I've made my choice: I'm an optimist. I am also a long-time admirer of the work of Joel Kotkin, who now offers up with co-author David Friedman a somewhat gloomy view of America's next couple of decades. Certainly, Kotkin and Friedman are calling things as they see them. And Kotkin's earlier credibility as a positive realist, earned under fire, requires that their unexpectedly glum argument be taken seriously by the likes of me.

There is no question but that Kotkin-Friedman are correct when they say there is a certain "goofy rosiness" in the air today and that "the phony tale of American decline has given way to the giddy myth of an America that can do no wrong." Life is not like that, neither is public policy. Undulation, fluctuation, and surprise are rules in our jungle, and Gen Xers surely deserve to be reminded of that. As K-F say, today's young adults are hardly in for a life of champagne and roses.

That noted, some very big structural transformations have taken place that give us strong reasons to think that most of the undulations in America's future are likely to lead in an upward direction. Because Kotkin and Friedman dwell principally on economics, let us begin there.

Picture a round table of wise humanist economists (a trioxymoron?) meeting about ten years ago. The question they are asked to fondle is this: "What would be the best things that could happen to the economy in the next ten years?" One economist would answer, "de-regulation." A second would say, "privatization." A third panelist would suggest, "lower inflation." A fourth would urge "more trade." When the conversation turned especially serious another panelist would suggest "the global establishment of the virtues of markets." Another would wish for "the spread of democratic values." And someone would say, probably greeted with peals of laughter, "the end of the Cold War."

All these things that were supposed to improve an economy...have happened, to one degree or another! Are we now to say: So what? Were all those aspirations meaningless? Isn't it more realistic to say that the partial realization of these goals will mean more economic growth, whose fruits will flow (surely in herky-jerky fashion) to most every corner of the earth, including and probably especially our own?

Instead K-F recount a set of anecdotes. Tech sector down, restaurant sector up; the high cost of computer programmers in St. Petersburg, Russia; the rise of foreign car manufacturers doing well in non-union U.S. factories manned by American workers (that's bad?). K-F are right about the value of immigrants. But don't forget that the last time the immigration law was changed, there was a shift toward providing visas more on the basis of skills. We can, and should, go even further in this direction.

But why such a microscopic view? There are some Himalayan macro facts out there to face up to. U.S. unemployment is now running at 4.7 percent, the lowest rate in 24 years. The gross domestic product has gone up by an average of 3.5

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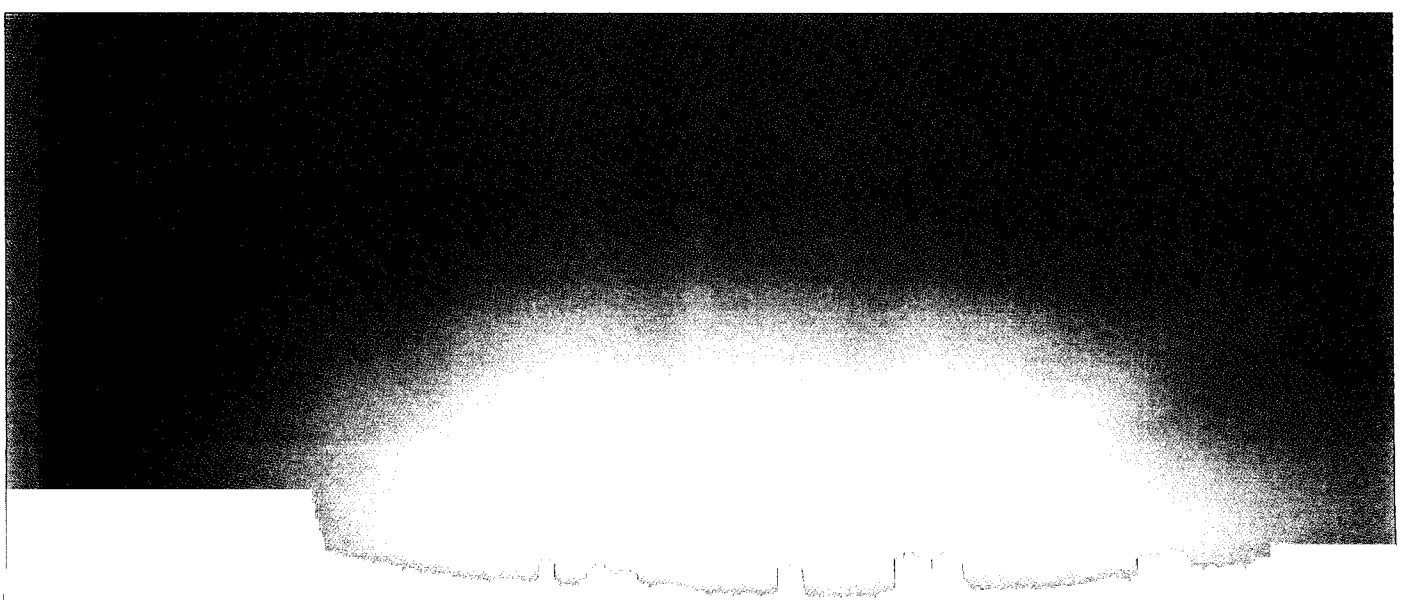

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percent per year since 1982, while inflation is at 2.2 percent, the lowest in 11 years.

There are also cultural aspects of American business that ought to encourage us. I recently interviewed professor William Sahlman of the Harvard Business School for my PBS program "Think Tank." Here is *his* anecdote about how we are positioned for the future:

> **Prof. Sahlman:** In the U.S., if you are involved in a venture that fails, you're now considered experienced. In almost every other culture in the world, take Japan as an illustration, if you fail, it has social and economic consequences that are awful to behold. In Europe it turns out that you're legally precluded from becoming managing director of another company if you're managing director of a company that goes bankrupt. So it's not surprising that you don't have a lot of new business formation in these other cultures that treat failure so harshly.
>
> **BW:** So a Bill Gates might think twice and say, "If I blow it, the punishment side is so heavy. Maybe I'll go work for IBM instead."
>
> **Prof. Sahlman:** I'll go work for a large company. Or I'll go work for the government instead—which often happens. In Japan smart people go into the Ministry of International Trade. So these are very different cultures.

Yes, we have lots of problems in our country. For instance, many (though not all) of our inner-city public schools are wretched. But we also have lots of very good schools in suburban, exurban, and rural areas. Not long ago, a survey of Asian scholars asked for a ranking of the best universities in the world. Eight of the top 12 schools they selected were American (including some public ones like Michigan and Wisconsin).

Yes, many of our central cities still have big problems, as K-F point out. It is correct that growth and entrepreneurial ventures are now more likely to thrive outside the cities. But the thrivers, as K-F also note, are often migrants from the cities. Are we more interested in people, or jurisdictional boundaries?

Moreover, many of the social trends that have ground down the inner cities seem to be moving in the right direction, finally. Violent crime is way down (although still way too high). Welfare is way down (probably for good). There is evidence now to suggest that the rate of illegitimate births is heading down (from admittedly horrific levels).

Also worth noting is America's unique demographic position as compared to our major competitors. The fertility rates in Europe and Japan are unprecedented, and potentially very disruptive of their societies. Absent immigration, it takes an average Total Fertility Rate (TFR) of 2.1 children per woman to keep a population from declining in geometric progression. Today, fertility in Europe as a whole has fallen to 1.5 children per woman. At a recent U.N. meeting of experts, Italian demographer Antonio Golini kept repeating one word to describe the European situation—"unsustainable."

We think we have problems. The Italian population, at its current rate of reproduction, will decline from 60 million people to 40 million in the next 35 years. (How would you like to be in the home construction business in such a country? How would you like to figure out how to pay for pensions and health costs when the ratio of oldsters to non-oldsters keeps climbing and climbing?) One of America's leading demographers, Samuel Preston of the University of Pennsylvania, recently made an estimate of what would happen if European countries moved relatively quickly back toward a 2.1 child per woman fertility rate. By the year 2060, when their population finally stabilized, they would have lost 24 percent of their people. But they are not moving quickly back to 2.1. They stand at all-time lows. European demographers see no likely prospect of an increase anytime soon, and some even see further declines.

Japan is in roughly the same situation, but with an even larger overhang of elderly people who will need to be supported by the working-age population. The Japanese TFR is down to 1.4, and most demographers there say it hasn't stopped falling. The full force of feminism hasn't yet washed across Japan. Japanese demographer Naohiro Ogawa says that Japan's population will decline from the current 125 million to 61 million by 2060.

America, meanwhile, averages 2.0 children per woman, which means that with moderate immigration rates we keep gently growing. That is a much better place to be.

Kotkin and Friedman are worried that the forces of liberalism and/or socialism are resurgent. That is an appropriate concern. Retrograde liberalism is like crabgrass—it keeps coming back. But as Fred Siegel points out in a recent book (the same one quoted by Kotkin-Friedman), even in some of the cities where brain-dead liberalism has had a lock on decision-making, voters have begun to wise up. When a tough-on-crime Republican like Rudy Giuliani wins a landslide in a five-to-one Democratic-over-Republican-registered liberal city like New York, then crabgrass is still being plucked.

As usual, much of this comes down to an argument about "compared to what?" and "compared to when?" Kotkin and Friedman are wise to keep an eye on potential trouble spots. Life is hard, and full of risks. And many of the snippy, foolish baby boomers they describe in their piece are learning this as they go along, because there is no avoiding it.

But as we battle today's dragons, it is wise to remember that not so long ago America was a nation under threat from real nukes wielded by real totalitarians, with soaring crime, welfare dependence, and illegitimacy rates, with slow economic growth and high inflation, where constant expansion of government and the welfare state was regarded as inexorable. Compared to that, we are doing rather well.

I wonder: Are Kotkin and Friedman newfound pessimists? Or merely consistent contrarians, reflexively going against the flow? Or perhaps they're just wrong, temporarily, in a country where we believe in redemption.

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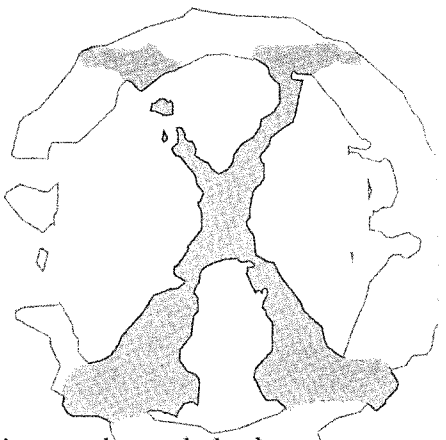
GEN X is OK (PART I)

By Edward E. Ericson, Jr.



Today's young adults

read little. They're poorly prepared for college. They're suckers for the instant gratification of booze and drugs. They're enormously confused about sex and scared to death of marriage. They're all for a woman's right to choose an abortion, especially the men. They force metal rings through the most unwelcoming of facial orifices. They're so light on civic duty that few vote and fewer still can imagine why one would die for one's country. And I like them.

I like them because they're lost and they know it. Even the name they bear, and despise, "Generation X," bespeaks their nondescript status. This label conveys a sense of formlessness, of waiting for a script to be written. Because it's hard to imagine that today's young will still be called Xers when they reach the old folks' homes, the label itself leaves open the possibility that someday they will find themselves and establish adult identity and purposefulness.

"Lost and know it" is not the way anyone would have described this generation's predecessors, the baby boomers. That generation knew lots of things. Boomers knew that the way to personal liberation was through political activism. They knew that sex should be free and divorce easy. They knew not to trust anyone over 30. (Today they trust no one under 30.) Soon they'll be playing shuffleboard in Florida, still telling themselves heroic stories of the moral greatness of the '60s.

Sketches of generations necessarily overgeneralize. Not all kids born after 1964 are likable, or even redeemable. Many boomers have done right by their kids. But the ones who have been decent parents are aware, to their mortification, that boomers as a group have frazzled the American family. In general, today's parents have given their offspring more reason than they themselves ever had to be wary of the grown-ups leading the country.

So one reason I'm predisposed to like the college students I see today is that I feel sorry for them. Best not to tell them that, though. The young should have a sense, however faulty, of limitless possibilities. They should exude idealism. Today's young are not without such natural signs of vigor. But they are also keenly aware of constraints. Especially in front of adults, they subdue their spontaneity, they mask their exuberance.

This pose of detachment is not without cause. Mass education factories cram 500 students into a lecture hall, mostly limit their contact to teaching assistants, then face customers apparently uninterested in studying hard, but quite willing to negotiate for higher grades than they have earned. Meanwhile, aging '60s radicals offer them lectures on the importance of being subversive and "transgressive." Who *wouldn't* respond to such developments with some cynicism and detachment?

From my academic perch I've watched the culture decline and take its toll on succeeding generations of students. I've always had at least my share of earnest learners, but I've also seen signs of trouble ahead. A young man complains about quizzes. "All those little details. I just want to see the big picture." (A big picture made up of what pieces? I stifle a sermon on intellectual slovenliness.) On opening day of a literature survey class, a young woman takes the syllabus, starts doing some tallying on it, raises her hand, "Where are all the women writers?" (Will a soft answer turn away this wrath?)

But here's the surprise. Things have been getting better! I had primed myself for a steady deterioration in the classroom, yet as the tail end of the Gen Xers have filtered through my classes I have experienced just the opposite. Mental lethargy is of course plentiful, and complaints about low grades an occupational hazard. But then a student comes to say his low grade makes him feel bad—for me! "It's not your fault, it's mine, Professor. It was a fair exam. Now I understand what's expected of me. I'll do better next time." Sullenness is down. Sweetness is up. Ideological cocksureness has receded. Students are embarrassed by their ignorance. Accord them some respect and encouragement,

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photography by Dave Scavone

and they'll rise to your challenges. Teaching, always enjoyable, is more fun today than it was as recently as four or five years ago. These tail-end Gen Xers give me hope.

Living among today's young makes me question the prevailing adult view of them. Let's start with Allan Bloom, whose *Closing of the American Mind* initiated a spate of jeremiads about the academy: "Today's select students know so much less, are so much more cut off from the tradition, are so much slacker intellectually, that they make their predecessors look like prodigies of culture." With knowledge of the Bible, which once provided a common culture, "diminished to the vanishing point," gone are any "divinations of the order of the whole of things." With all sense of heroism left unnurtured, and a passion only to avoid being called "intolerant," students now aspire no higher than to be citizens of what essayist Florence King has acidly labeled the Republic of Nice.

To his credit, Bloom laid less blame on students than on the delinquent academy. Youngsters had been taught "to doubt beliefs before they believed in anything." Author David Denby understands this. In his recent work *Great Books* he warns that "students need to be enchanted before they are disenchanted. They need a chance at making a self before they are told that it doesn't exist." Unfortunately, you will find few professors today (despite the PR copy in college catalogues) who still think and talk that way. Rewards on campus now favor nihilistic "deconstructers" instead.

When I first read Bloom, I was persuaded at almost all points, including his assessment that when it comes to the quality and motivation of students "the soil is ever thinner." This is exactly what I have recently changed my mind about. In terms of moral training, today's young are clearly worse off than previous generations. They come to college with little by way of developed virtues. But they come without hubris, and they are not averse to virtue nor to having someone introduce them to it. They are ripe soil, waiting to be tilled by mentors who still love and understand the older, permanent truths.

But will we take up this challenge? Waves of complaints about college students have followed in Bloom's wake. One example that has received wide play is Peter Sacks's *Generation X Goes to College*. Rather smugly proud of his baby-boomer identity, the journalist takes a spin as a community college teacher. Observing such decay in the academy as dumbed-down courses and time-serving teachers, he blames it all on—the students. He categorizes them as "fundamentally different human beings than students a decade ago" and lashes their "entitlement mentality," without ever asking where they got it. Eventually he launches a "Sandbox Experiment": easing up on requirements, making classes casual, and teaching to be popular. His student evaluations go up. *[Editor's note: See page 46 for an original essay on this subject by Mr. Sacks.]*

As the title of a recent book by William Willimon and Thomas Naylor has it, this is *The Abandoned Generation*. After opening with the ritualistic dismissal of horrid right-wing critics of the university, Willimon and Naylor lodge a conservative-sounding lament about the "abandonment by higher education of the moral character-related aspects of education." They quote a college president who concedes that, when it comes to moral direction, a "culture of neglect" now prevails on campuses. They cite a student: "Nobody seems to have asked, 'How do people become good people?' We need more leadership from faculty and administration." They tell of a student who switched majors solely because he found a prof "who has really shown some interest in me." They find today's

Edward E. Ericson, Jr., a professor of English at Calvin College, abridged The Gulag Archipelago *in cooperation with Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn.*

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young, in contrast to those of the 1960s, "much more interested in the search for roots, stability, order, and identity" than in "breaking away." So Willimon and Naylor propose friendship as a guiding metaphor for faculty-student life on campus. How quaint.

Despite the way today's young Americans have been misled and abandoned by their elders, some encouraging signs appear in the statistical data, along with many surprises.

First, quite a discrepancy exists between how the old and young view Generation X. Young people aged 18-24 and their elders were given a dozen adjectives and asked to pick the one that best characterized today's youth. The differences in perception, as reported by the Roper Center, are sharp.

- *Lazy?* This is the topper among older Americans, selected by 22 percent. Meanwhile only one percent of the young chose that label.
- *Confused?* Yes, say 18 percent of adults, but only five percent of the young.
- *Unfocused?* The choice of 12 percent of adults, versus only two percent of kids.
- *Independent?* Five percent of older Americans chose this descriptive, as did 16 percent of young people.
- *Determined?* Selected by four percent of all elders, and 20 percent of the young.
- *Ambitious?* Picked by six percent of the elders, and 25 percent of the young.

On to politics. As everyone "knows," the young tend to be liberal, then grow more conservative as they age. But today that pattern is topsy-turvy. On campuses, in entertainment, among the media, and in other places where baby boomers dominate, liberalism reigns. In many places, Lefties pitch a near shutout. Meanwhile, increasing numbers of Xers are turning out to be more conservative than their parents—especially if their parents are college-educated. For some of the young, this is a conscious choice; among others it is unknowing.

Recent studies have found as many Republicans as Democrats among Americans age 18-24. Kids between 12 and 17 actually prefer Republicans to Democrats by almost two to one. The young favor balanced budgets and oppose current levels of government services. Asked in 1996 if they preferred Clinton's position on budget issues or that of congressional Republicans, Americans over 25 chose Clinton by 20 percentage points, while young adults chose the GOP by nearly the same margin: 53 percent to 36 percent. What sort of family is our Big Village raising, anyway?

Youthful apathy about voting causes much adult hand-wringing. The 1994 election drew 39 percent of voters overall but just 16 percent of those age 18-24. Only 32 percent of 1994 college freshmen considered "keeping up with political affairs" a very important goal, compared to 58 percent in 1966. While these numbers give no one solace, they especially unnerve those who favor government-guided "macro" solutions. By contrast, today's young are embracing "micro" approaches. A majority of current college students take time out for unpaid volunteer work. Only one-third agree that "realistically, an individual can do little to bring about changes in our society," and 62 percent rate "helping others who are in difficulty" as "very important." Grandiose posturing is giving way not to passive self-indulgence but to modest activism.

One big factor conservatizing our young is today's nanny state. According to a study done by a Democratic research outfit, half of Americans over 65 cling to faith in federal entitlement programs, but 83 percent of those 18-34 think Washington has made financial promises to them it won't be able to keep. Eight in ten of the young tell Gallup that they will save enough to take care of their retirement and that they are eager for alternatives to Social Security.

Setting oneself up in a small business appeals enormously to today's young. Already, one-fifth of all small-business owners are Gen Xers, and the business start-up rate among persons age 25-34 is three times that of any older age group. A Roper survey shows that 60 percent of college students entertain prospects of owning their own business, up sharply from earlier years. By a two-to-one margin Xers say they'd prefer owning a business to being a top executive in a large company. By a four-to-one margin they choose it over holding an important position in politics or government.

Recently, *Fortune* found that 89 percent of persons under 34 are optimistic about their own careers and financial prospects, even while they have doubts about the direction the nation has taken. Essentially, self-reliance is trumping trust in Big Government. Plenty of baby boomers went from playing radical to coat-and-tie corporate careers, but they felt they had sold out. Their children seem less plagued by campus-inspired guilt.

Consumption patterns provide another unexpected glimpse into how Generation X is developing into adulthood. Contrary to their image as unbridled consumers, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics finds today's young Americans (18-28) are actually rather frugal. Compared to youth of a decade ago, today's kids spend less (in constant dollars) on clothes (by 12 percent), restaurants (by 18 percent), and new cars (by 19 percent, buying used instead). And they spend a lot less on alcohol and tobacco. Hardly the profile of materialistic profligates.

When it comes to religion, the media tell us today's young are the first post-Christian children, trying to make sense of "life after God." True, Gen Xers have grown up in a society where most public places have become prayer-free zones, and they have observed the media's ridiculing of religion throughout their lives. Yet somehow trust in God has not declined from the boomers to their offspring, even though trust in people *has*. Data from the University of Chicago's National Opinion Research Center show that on most religious questions, today's young more or less track along the same lines as their parents. And on several measures—such as the importance of attending church regularly and relying on church teachings to make personal decisions—Gen Xers actually seem to be edging away from their parents' religious views and back toward their grandparents'.

Thirty-six percent of older Americans (born before the baby boom) think the Bible is literally true. Among boomers, the number drops to 26 percent; among Xers it rebounds to 30 per-

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Gen Xers seem to be edging away from some of the views of their parents —and back toward those of their grandparents.

cent. The same drop-and-bounce pattern holds on the question of whether it's "very important to have faith in God," where rates roll from 85 to 68 to 73 percent among pre-Boomers, Boomers, and Gen Xers .

More than two-thirds of today's young Americans pray at least weekly; 41 percent, daily. More than three in five read the Bible at least sometimes. And 83 percent have attended a religious service during the previous year. A Gallup poll of teenagers shows two-thirds affirming that religion can help answer scientific questions, such as how the world was created. Two-thirds also think religion can "answer most of the problems" surrounding marriage and divorce. If the usual pattern holds of people growing more religious as they age (as is happening now among boomers), Gen Xers will preside over a rebound of religious practice.

Xer sex is the topic, among all topics, that alarms adults. Even liberals now pine for the days when more young people just said "no" to sexual experimentation. Stories abound of casual promiscuity among the young, and births outside of marriage have soared. A third of today's college students (and rising) have parents who are divorced (no one's fault, of course!), and in my long experience with college students I've never known a generation that feels more detached and lonely, or yearns more for intimacy, than this one. So they are exceptionally vulnerable to, among other things, the blandishments of the supreme act of physical closeness.

Rates of premarital intercourse, which had held steady for the previous 40 years, took off in the late 1960s. Colleges, while not in the least reluctant to enforce prohibitions on incorrect speech and assorted political sins, have sworn off all responsibility for students' moral lives—except to cheerily encourage their charges to have "safe" sex. The proportion of colleges with separate men's and women's dorms dropped from 77 percent in 1969-70 to 10 percent 20 years later. Two-thirds of institutions now have no policy against having members of the opposite sex in one's dorm room overnight. Alcohol, the lubrication of choice for casual sex, can officially be consumed in student rooms at 90 percent of colleges. So sexual anarchy has spread, trust between young women and men has fallen off, and personal unhappiness is up.

Xers are the first generation who had to run the gauntlet of the Pill and the abortion mills just to get born. They grew up in what Neil Howe and William Strauss have called "the most virulently anti-child period in modern American history." From earliest consciousness, Xers have breathed the air of sexual permissiveness. A Kafkan centipede couldn't count on its legs the number of times they've heard on TV that having sex is normal, that Americans are sexually repressed, that the speaker has finally learned to be comfortable with her (it's always her) body. Sex is where our society works hardest to decouple actions from consequences. But while medical devices can avert some of the consequences, nothing can contravene the effects of casual sex on souls.

To make this brew of sexual free-lancing even more rancid, you can add the male-bashing of academic feminism. The cumulative result is that trust and understanding between young women and men is at an all-time low. If you plotted to confuse kids about sex, you couldn't do better than adults are now doing, out of unbelievable foolishness.

Even so, surveys show that Xers are no more libertine than boomers. On the question of extramarital sex, Xers are actually somewhat sterner than boomers—more like their grandparents. Sanity has not altogether disappeared. Responding to the statement, "If two people really like each other, it's all right for them to have sex even if they've known each other for only a very short time," almost 60 percent of 1994 college freshmen disagreed. And what are we to make of the revival of campus interest in Jane Austen's novels, where sex drives a whole plot, not just a quick climax?

Frederica Mathewes-Green recently noted that Centers for Disease Control studies and Roper surveys find that the proportion of high-schoolers reporting sexual experiences has actually dropped rather sharply since the late-1980s. And most of the kids who are sexually experienced say they wish they had waited until they were older. If society as a whole is having second thoughts about sexual liberation, promiscuity, abortion, and careerism that shortchanges child-rearing, Mathewes-Green marshals evidence that the young may be leading the way.

The young seem increasingly worried that sexual anarchy is damaging them. "Many of these kids want a future very different from their present," says one Columbia professor who charts this subject. They talk about "marriage, and kids, and the traditional family as a goal for life." We must hope he is correct. Allan Bloom rightly said the decomposition of the family bond "is surely America's most urgent social problem." If today's young don't fix this problem, it may become past fixing. Sex is probably this generation's biggest test. If they can come to sensible terms with their sexual appetites and start practicing in the present the self-control they envision for their future, they just might become wholesome adults living stable, satisfying lives.

I didn't plan to develop a special fondness for today's young. My students made me do it. Of course I haven't stopped worrying. This generation does not seem headed for greatness. They have suffered too much cultural despoliation, too much distortion of personhood, for that. It would take a global cataclysm for them to have any chance of rising to the heights of human valor.

But will they be basically sensible, productive adults? Were I a betting man, I'd put my money on them. And the more intergenerational friendships they form, the better their odds will be.

All in all, I think Gen X is OK.

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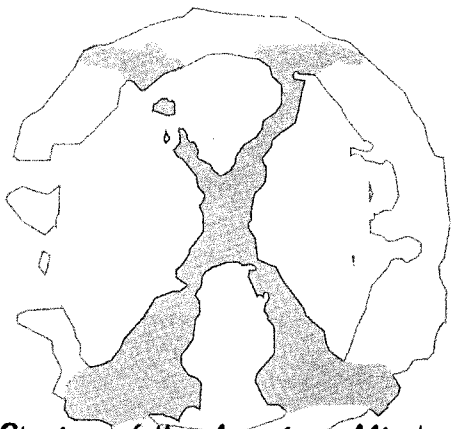
GEN X is OK (PART II)



By Diana J. Schaub

When Allan Bloom published *The Closing of the American Mind,* his best-selling 1987 meditation on the slack souls of the young, I was a graduate student. At the time, I was quite willing to believe it fairly described a generation. Now that I have reread it as a teacher, a teacher whose only experience has been with Gen X students, it seems to me that there are lots of exceptions—so many as to call into question Bloom's dire description. ✠ Some of the students I am thinking of run against Gen X stereotypes by expressing remarkably clear and unapologetic moral judgments. These students have not had their convictions rendered vague by exposure to that slow solvent labeled "tolerance." Often these students are serious Christians, or serious patriots; sometimes they are strong political partisans; occasionally they are *sui generis,* pursuing some idiosyncratic, anomalous, or extremist vision. ✠ A second, larger group of exceptional young people are those who have mostly absorbed the dreary, relativistic conventions of modern intellectual life but are either dissatisfied or capable of becoming dissatisfied with these dogmas. They possess half-formed and hidden longings. Their passionlessness is a pose. All they need is the right spark. ✠ Bloom is certainly right about relativism; it acts as a wet blanket smothering the fires of the soul. Students have been ill-instructed on this front, and they know it. But what continues to astonish me is the resilience of nature. The soul's highest longings remain, even when they are stifled into sad and grotesque aspects.

I should say a word or two about my sample. I teach at Loyola College in Maryland, a selective Catholic college with a solid regional reputation and a devotion to the liberal arts. It may be that qualities like filial piety, patriotism, and religious belief are less moth-eaten among students at Loyola than on some other campuses. When some of my students recently read Bloom's discussion of "Relationships" in *Closing,* they found certain of his assertions to be wide of the mark and were inclined to attribute this to the distance between themselves and the sophisticates at the elite colleges Bloom concentrated on. ✠ In one or two other cases, however, they thought Bloom's assertions simply did not accord with any possible reality. For instance, Bloom's claim that parents now "rarely protest when boyfriends sleep over in their homes" elicited jaws dropped in dis-

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Student Heroes

Parents	29%
Religious figure (usually Jesus)	14
Relative, friend, or neighbor	12
Entertainer	6
Teacher	5
Politician	5
Athlete	5
Scientist, scholar, author	4
Business or military leader	3
Journalist	1
Clergy	1
Other	12

Source: 1993 national undergraduate survey, to be published in *When Hope and Fear Collide*, by Arthur Levine and Jeannette Cureton, forthcoming.

belief and obviously still-fresh memories of the sexual strictures of their own and their friends' parents.

Bloom describes contemporary families as spiritually "empty," and says they have been replaced by self-centeredness. While this is true in all too many cases, I have the definite sense that young people who do come from "good homes" today are actually more wholesomely linked to their parents than children were in times past. In big ways and small, most Gen Xers make it clear that their families matter greatly to them. When I put one of Bloom's questions—"who are your heroes?"—to my students, asking them to take a couple minutes at the end of class to jot down their answers (ungraded), many stayed past the allotted time to describe whom they admired and why. Seventy percent named a family member, very often a father.

This seems to me to be quite an appropriate answer for citizens of a healthy society to give. My students see real virtues in their middle-class families—not brilliant ones perhaps, but solid. In their own words, their parents are "self-sacrificing," "loving," "dedicated," "passionate," "optimistic," and "hard working in good times and in bad." They admire their parents "for revealing that happiness and not money is important to life," and "for more reasons than paper would allow me to convey." As one student wrote, "I have no problem with turning into my father." (By the way, a teacher—usually an English teacher—was the second most favored choice as hero.)

Not only do these students want to be like their parents, but in thinking about raising their own families they believe it's important that the generations remain in reasonable physical proximity. They set limits upon the fabled American mobility. While they might still read Kerouac's *On the Road*, they are not rebels. Nor is their lack of rebelliousness explained by their parents' being so latitudinarian as to offer nothing in the way of rules. For example, whereas my generation grew up with unlimited access to television, sizable numbers of my students grew up with substantial limitations on their viewing, in terms of both time and content. Parents today are much more cognizant of the power of images. They know, partly from their own early experience, how easy it is to lose your kids—to television, to music, to drugs, to other kids. They counter not with absolute prohibitions, but with prudent restrictions. They move their children in carefully calibrated stages toward trustworthiness.

Many Gen Xers respond to today's flood of choices with forethought and application, and sometimes just with a desire to have things settled. They want to settle on a major; being "undecided" weighs on them. Many are extremely career-minded. (The wishes and demands of their parents figure heavily here; I've seen students struggle through courses of study clearly at odds with their hearts' desires and the bent of their talents.) Of course, this premature seriousness raises its own dilemmas for liberal education. But it is a very different matter from indiscipline.

Back in 1987, Bloom described the decay of marriage as "surely America's most urgent social problem. But nobody even tries to do anything about it. The tide seems to be irresistible. Among the many items on the agenda of those promoting America's moral regeneration, I never find marriage and divorce."

In the ten years since that was written, much has changed. Close-up observation of the havoc family breakdown has wrought in the lives of their friends has led many of my students to a new seriousness about marriage. Liberal and conservative students alike are very willing to consider tougher divorce laws, an attitude of public disapproval, and a return to "staying together for the sake of the children."

Another area where change for the better is underway is in public-spiritedness. The social conscience of today's students is markedly different from that of the protesters of the 1960s and '70s. At Loyola, the motto is not "tune in, turn on, drop out," but rather "men and women for others" and "building the good community." Volunteerism is at record levels on our campus. Sixty percent of the students are active in community service—most of it practical, unglamorous work like tutoring young children, repairing houses, visiting the elderly, and serving meals to the homeless.

Interestingly, this revival of neighborliness is accompanied by deep cynicism about national politics, and sometimes about politics altogether. Many students

Attitudes Toward Education, 1993 vs. 1969

	1993 undergrads	1969 undergrads
Views on grades		
Undergraduate education in America would be improved if grades were abolished	21 %	57%
I really don't care what grades I get	7	12
What is essential in a college education?		
Detailed grasp of a special field	71	62
Training and skills for an occupation	70	59
Formulating the values and goals of my life	50	71
Learning to get along with people	47	76

Source: Campus surveys by Arthur Levine, in Levine and Cureton.

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conceive of service as a "pure" alternative to politics. Yet I can't help but think that service involvement will lead them gradually toward fuller civic engagement, as they see that effective local action requires knowledge of the political scene. I expect Generation X may shoulder their adult responsibilities in this area and others more gracefully than their precursors, who viewed the maturing process as "selling out."

Despite their knee-jerk cynicism, today's young would like to think well of their country. The main obstacle is not anything in their own political experience—Vietnam and Watergate happened long before they were born—but rather the general debunking attitude toward America with which they have been indoctrinated in schools. They think the only choices are either the most sentimental patriotism (for which they are too sophisticated) or the criminalization of the American Founding (which, by unmooring them, leaves them unhappy). When they are shown the way to an intelligent, nuanced appreciation of the past, say by reading Frederick Douglass's Fourth of July Oration, or Lincoln's speech on the *Dred Scott* decision, they leap at it.

You can see them struggling for true learning. They really want to know how they ought to view their nation and its guiding principles. The questions come fast and furious. It is here, where their perplexity is painful to them, that today's crippling mantra of relativism can be squarely confronted.

I have saved till last the matter of men and women. Bloom described hearts grown coarse and callous, and mourned a fall from "eros" into cruder "relationships." Unfortunately, there is plenty of evidence that this decay continues today. Many students now pursue not love affairs but what they call "hook ups"—as in, "Did you hook up with anybody at the party?" (meaning, go home with them). It is a usage indicative of their self-understanding: They are simply vehicles equipped with gear for easy coupling and decoupling.

Folks used to speak of marriage as "getting hitched," which suggested distinct elements (horse and buggy) linked for the long haul. Or one used to recount how "she got her hooks into him"—language which acknowledged the need for female wiles to grapple with and restrain a skittish man. The new lingo is entirely unisex; it implies an activity so consensual that there is no need for a quest or contest. Men used to speak vulgarly of "scoring" but such language would be impermissible today, not because of its crudity but because of its sexism. Equal atoms in free fall just "hook up" if they happen to run into each other at opportune times. Of course, such hook ups are understood by all to be impermanent, since there is no source of tension that would transform the two building blocks into a molecule.

This pretense of mutuality in promiscuous sex is of course belied by the furor over "date rape." Human beings, or women at least, can't quite come to regard their sexual gear as common property. But they have rejected all of the conditions—restraints, protections, courtship rituals—that once elevated the consent of women.

Among all too many young men, sexual consent is thought of as something to be extracted, not earned. We can talk all we like of "consent," but as long as we are applying that concept to situations in which human beings have reduced themselves to states of drunkenness in which they can barely form words, I don't know how consent can have any meaning. For the consent of women to be once again respected by men, women must first be respectful of themselves. In saying this, I don't mean to let men off the hook. But it does seem it is largely going to be up to the women to re-establish decency in sexual relations (despite the signs plastered all around campuses that say "Only men can stop rape").

A goodly number of students are repelled by the current campus sexual scene. I can't hazard percentages, but every single student who participated in a discussion I recently led on this subject expressed disdain. This gives me some hope. Many of the disdainers are themselves not chaste, but they would prefer more lasting relationships. For such students there is still a connection, however tenuous, between the spirit and the body; some threshold of seriousness must be reached before they will give their bodies. One young woman told me that before arriving at college she thought sexual activity was "no big deal," but she soon saw there was something important at stake.

For a few students, so much is at stake that they intend to wait until marriage. They are generally quiet about this, but when asked, they are not at all ashamed to defend virginity (and to denounce in the strongest terms the "hook up" crowd, and, more cautiously, the serial monogamists). It seems that the conception of chastity held by these students is more erotic than puritanical—they adhere to it not as a prohibition but as a promise of a fuller future.

Volunteer Service and Politics

Proportion of undergraduates volunteering during year:	64%
Type of work	
Fundraising	27%
Children	24
Religiously sponsored	24
Handicapped	11
Charity organization	10
Environmental	9
Elderly	9
Hospitals	7
Homeless/soup kitchens	7
Other	26
Distrust of politics	
Meaningful social change cannot be achieved through traditional American politics	57%
Generally speaking, our political system is working well in handling America's problem	22

Source: 1993 national undergraduate survey, Levine and Cureton.

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One student, not herself a virgin, had been struck by a past boyfriend's explanation of his virginity: "I want my wife to know that I loved her before I met her." My student saw her boyfriend's refusal to press her was a way of honoring her should she turn out to be the one. When that didn't develop, she was happy to send him on in quest of the woman who would have her marriage suffused with this ideal of love. She came to appreciated what virginity might mean for marriage, and, interestingly, she saw that it could contribute to friendship among women—by not undermining the possibility of another woman's happiness.

There are, of course, ideological obstacles—feminism particularly—that stand in the way of young Americans hoping to rediscover "real eros." I don't know whether the full amplitude of soulful love could ever be recovered by most young Americans or not. But nature does have a way of reasserting herself. There are students willing to say some heretical things today about ideal relations between men and women (often sparked by a reading of Tocqueville's remarks on American women). I have female students who frankly avow that their aim is to be a wife and mother (preferably soon after graduation), and male students who intend to seek a highly educated wife who will value home and children to the exclusion of career. Still other female students already feel profoundly divided.

Much to my amazement, I have seen young feminists trained in "gender studies" respond favorably to Jane Austen and, even more amazingly, to Henry James (swept off their feet by the pure masculinity of *The Bostonians*' Basil Ransom). There is also a student group on campus called the Men's Action Committee. While their advisor would prefer that they reflect critically on their masculinity, one member tells me that they see themselves as the sort of fellows who would intervene if they saw a "Loyola-brau" (the nickname of the Löwenbrau-guzzling, lowbrow, Loyola male) pestering a woman at a bar. In other words, they don't want to deconstruct their masculinity; they want to exercise it by coming to the aid of damsels in distress.

Perhaps these hints and flashes of respect among Gen Xers for older truths are not much to go on, but it seems to me that some of the conventional supports of love, family, patriotism, and piety are sturdier than we sometimes fear. Yet if the traditions and institutions that inculcate virtue are to be maintained, they must be cultivated and defended more self-consciously than they ever were in the past. Efforts in this direction can be seen in, for instance, the highly-wrought marriage ceremonies so popular now. One sometimes winces through these, but one has the sense that most of the marriages so launched will last.

These are signs of a somewhat reconfigured bourgeois virtue in the breasts of many of today's young Americans. The hardiness and adaptive power of traditional manners and mores may yet save our next generation.

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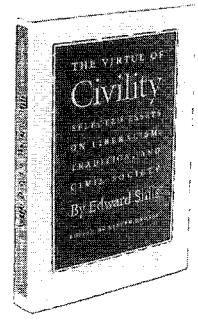

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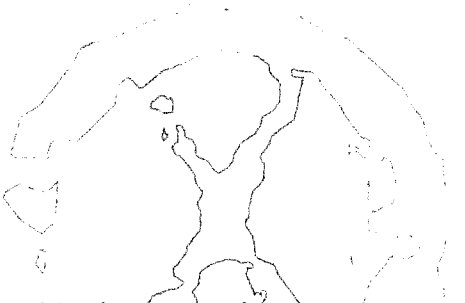
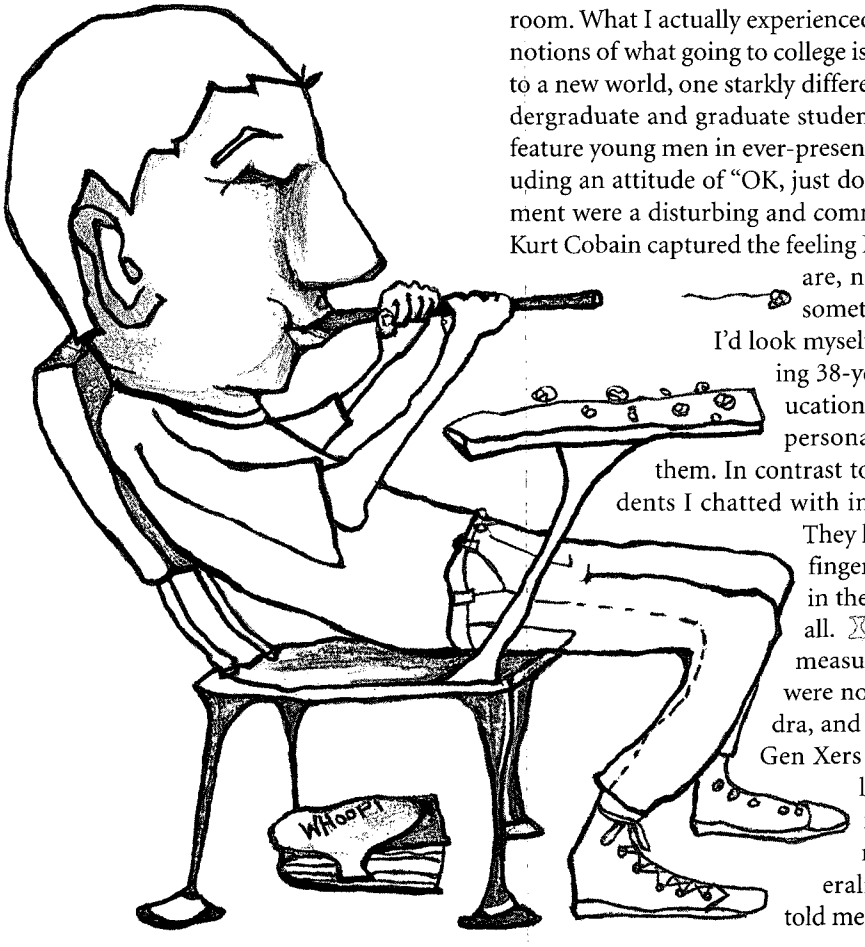
NO... GENERATION X is NOT OK



By Peter Sacks

Educators like to believe that despite the changing of generations, students maintain roughly the same basic attitudes toward hard work, success, learning, and knowledge. Obvious problems, therefore, regularly get categorized as "no worse than in the past." But in Generation X we may be witnessing the evolution of a new sort of student—one with a much less wholesome perspective on education, effort, and personal responsibility. ⁂ When I took up teaching at a community college after spending several years in the professional world—first as an economist, then as a newspaper journalist writing about business and economics—I expected to encounter a measure of intellectual curiosity, not to mention courtesy and respect, in the classroom. What I actually experienced instead in the early 1990s was enough to shatter my notions of what going to college is about. At times, I felt like Rip Van Winkle waking up to a new world, one starkly different than during my own stints as a baby-boomer undergraduate and graduate student. ⁂ My mental images of Generation X students feature young men in ever-present backward baseball hats, slumped in their chairs, exuding an attitude of "OK, just do something to amuse me." Looks of utter disengagement were a disturbing and commonplace sight. The late twenty something rock star Kurt Cobain captured the feeling I often had with his mocking Gen X refrain: "Here we are, now entertain us." ⁂ At first, I thought there was something terribly wrong with me. Sometimes, after class, I'd look myself over, double-checking my self-image: a well-meaning 38-year-old liberal who vigorously believed in higher education for all. I looked to see that I wasn't a geek. ⁂ On a personal level, I liked my Gen X students, at least most of them. In contrast to their tough, insouciant exteriors, many of the students I chatted with in my office were engaging, intelligent, and sincere. They had a yearning for something I couldn't quite put my finger on. I began to think of it as a hunger for goodness in the world, a hope that things would turn out okay after all. ⁂ But when it came to individual responsibility and measuring up to standards of performance, my reactions were not positive. I don't particularly relish playing Cassandra, and I know that no description holds universally. Many Gen Xers are bright, hard-working, and succeeding at challenging jobs or difficult courses of study. Even among my ordinary community college students there were many I admired. But they were exceptions to the generalizations I've formed. ⁂ One of my students once told me: "From my perspective, we are in college to warm the



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Many **Gen Xers** don't distinguish between going to college and making other types of purchases. In return for paying the tuition one **feels entitled** to an "A" or "B".

seats, basically. That is what we are doing.... Our generation is very lazy. We don't work a tenth of what our parents did. Maybe we're so sick and tired of everything, the result is laziness." An annual survey of college freshmen conducted by UCLA researchers found in its latest report that nearly 36 percent of freshman were frequently bored in class. In nearly 30 years of taking the pulse of the young, that's a record high.

I quickly found that my students, who had learned to count and spell from Big Bird and Grover, didn't want me—a real live mortal—for a teacher. They wanted an *entertainer*. They preferred a video image to flesh-and-blood reality. I couldn't compete with the noisy, glitzy spectacle of sounds and images that my students had grown used to in popular culture. When I didn't measure up to their sophisticated standards of performance, they'd click me off. They would read the sports section, cram for a test, or, if the mood struck, simply walk out the door. Admittedly, I was no Jay Leno in the classroom, but how far did I need to turn up the decibel level or the humor quotient to get a rise out of these folks?

A student put it bluntly: "We want you guys to dance, sing, and cry. Seriously, that is what we consider to be good learning. We expect so much more from everything now because of the media. You guys can't compete."

Although I endured annoying instances of pagers and cell phones going off in the classroom, my experience pales next to that of a former colleague. In the middle of a class discussion, she noticed a student in the back of the room watching a portable TV that he had put on his desk. The teacher stopped everything, walked up to the young man, and asked him to turn the TV off. His response was shameless: "There wasn't anything good on anyway."

This shamelessness, the shocking lack of humility with which many of my students acted out in the college classrooms, is what shook me to my bones. One instructor told me of a loudly slumbering student who, when awakened, was asked if he was tired. The reply: "My coach says I have to be in class every day, but he didn't say I had to be awake the whole time." Another student, facing the need to present scientific research to support a point of view on a controversial subject, remarked, "Why are colleges trying to force this stuff down our throats and trying to make us think when our minds are already formed?"

For teachers, whose tenure and promotion prospects are based significantly on classroom performance, the institutional pressures to meet Gen Xers' entertainment standards are often stark and loathsome. Forget the stories about political correctness or multiculturalism pressuring professors to conform to a party line. The far more insidious danger to higher education today is the imperative to satisfy the customer. That's what finally drove me out of the classroom.

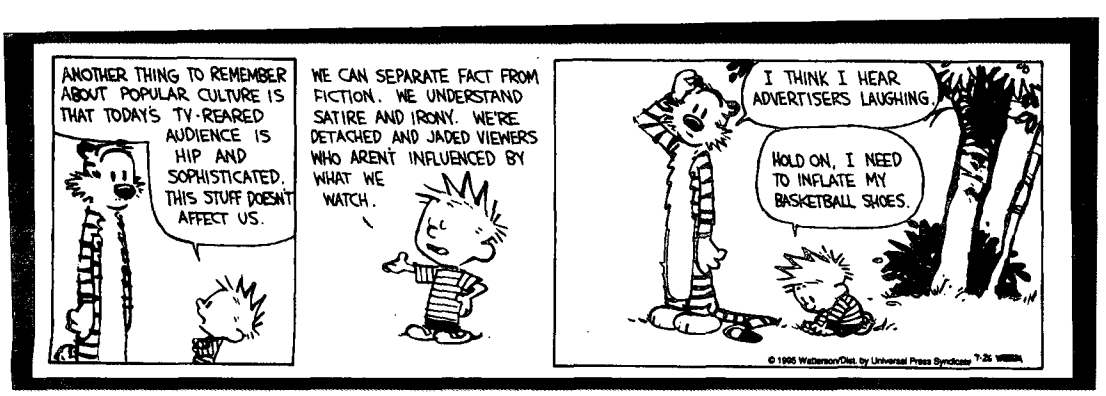
To be sure, consumerism's influence on higher education is not new. David Reisman recognized the transition from faculty control of the universities to student domination back in 1981. He wrote: "The shift from academic merit to student consumerism is one of the two greatest reversals in direction in all the history of American higher education; the other being the replacement of the classical college by the modern university a century ago." What's new is the force with which Gen Xers have brought this ethic to academic life—from classroom teaching and learning, to decisions about faculty tenure and promotion, to an array of student services that make today's university look like a social services agency.

To be fair, the responsibility for this state of affairs does not lie entirely with Generation X. The transformation of American culture toward amusement in all things, including higher education, started with my own generation, the baby boomers. But we baby boomers were fledglings on this point in comparison to our media-saturated offspring. Under the tutelage of boomers, Gen Xers have grown up as consummate consumers, from the tips of their Chicago Bulls hats to the toes of their Nikes.

Many Gen Xers don't distinguish between going to college and making other types of purchases. In return for paying the tuition (or having it paid by one's parents), one feels entitled to a measure of achievement, meaning an *A* or *B* at a minimum. If you view yourself as a consumer of education, the responsibility for your success lies with the institution, and especially with the teachers who staff it. The vast majority of colleges and universities that serve ordinary middle-class Americans are bending over backwards today, and even doing reverse flips with double twists, to ensure the advancement of all their students, whether they deserve it or not.

A freshman told me: "Yeah, kids want it handed to them. Kids see people like Bill Gates, who gets rich out of nowhere. They just kind

Peter Sacks is a journalist, and author of Generation X Goes to College: An Eye-Opening Account of Teaching in Postmodern America.



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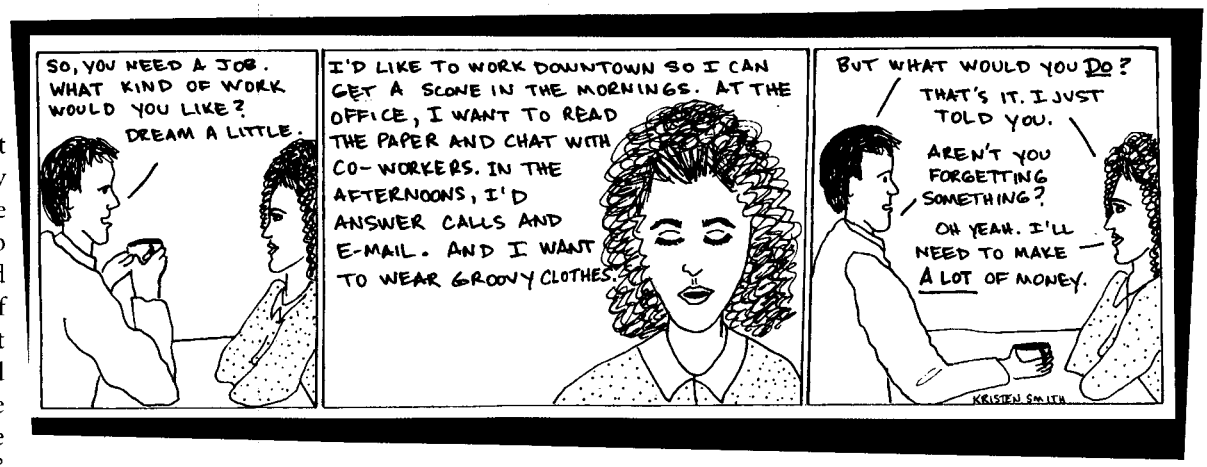


of expect it, expect it to come out of the sky somewhere.... I have friends who expect to get good grades and they don't study. If they don't, they get mad at teachers and blame them.... The system has often made it too easy to succeed."

Indeed, most Gen X students understand how to game the system, playing the role of disgruntled buyer. If you don't like your grade, even if you know that's what you earned, file a complaint. Go to the dean.

Some of my students believed grades were matters of negotiation—and occasionally even intimidation. One of them, for example, complained in his evaluation of my teaching that I kept marking him down for awkward and unclear writing. "I like writing awkwardly and unclearly," he asserted. He added, with the flair of a true student consumer, "If I don't get a good grade in this class, I'll be talking to your superiors."

During my time as a teacher, I discovered students who did not take notes—students who wouldn't write anything down unless specifically ordered to by the instructor, with a warning that the material just might appear on an upcoming exam. I discovered students who did not read. A textbook sales rep once told me that college texts were piling up on college bookstore shelves, unsold, well into the academic term; not until professors took notice and laid down the law that students must read the texts did many students actually buy their books. I asked the sales rep if this trend might be a matter of economics. She told me that $40 sweatshirts and hats and CDs fly out of college bookstores. "No, it's not economics," she said. "I think students have changed. The value of a book and the value of learning have not been instilled in them. They've got less connection to the printed word."

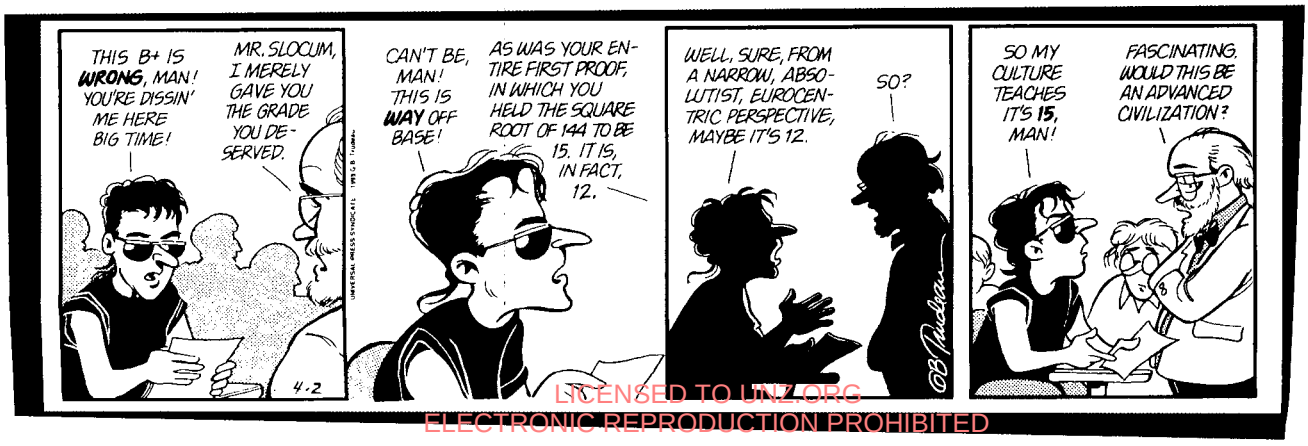
True, intergenerational comparisons are strewn with land mines. Older generations have found unlikable qualities in young people since the days of Socrates. And Xers have taken a full share of generational knocks. But there is a substantial basis for some of the unflattering portrayals of Generation X.

Some people are coming to grips with the Gen X character. I've encountered a remarkable number of college teachers who are beginning to challenge the myth that colleges can take all those blank slates called students and turn them into educated people. A professor at a West Coast college, desperate as he faced today's student culture after nearly 30 years of teaching, came to a realization that was to me a breath of fresh air. "I decided," he said, "that I wasn't the problem. Students were the problem."

What all this means for American public life and institutions is open to question. But one thing is already clear: Universities and professors are having difficulty intellectually stimulating this disengaged cohort of students. Unfortunately, most have taken the easy way out: Grades are inflating out of control, and academic standards are turning to mush. In my own classroom I resorted, in desperation, to methods that would ensure I'd have happy student customers whether they really learned or not. Instead of encouraging the values of hard work, individual responsibility, and standards of excellence, we have promoted higher education as a kind of entitlement. And the singing, dancing, and pandering by teachers inevitably encourages students to further question the importance of hard work.

The results for the American workplace may be even more serious than in academe. In our competitive, technological world, the margin for error and shoddiness has become increasingly slim. We ought to wonder about the safety and efficacy of a democratic society run by people who don't read, don't study, expect to be entertained in all facets of their lives, and don't necessarily equate achievement with effort.

That may be a bit too gloomy. But, somehow, I doubt it.



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An Intimate Profile of GENERATION X

(AP Photo/Amy Sancetta)

By Kristi Lockhart Keil

For the past ten years I've taught a seminar at an Ivy League university on "Psychopathology and the Family." I also lead a seminar on depression. Through these courses, as well as my advising and clinical work, I've gotten to know many Generation Xers quite well.

My perspective on them is probably skewed toward the positive. For one thing, attending a top university usually means a student is functioning well in most areas of his or her life. And having sat on the admissions committee, I know that most of our students come from economically secure, intact families.

One surprise in my admissions experience was discovering that so many of these unusually successful high school students come from families where the mother did not work, at least when her children were young. I expected to find more families with two high-powered parents working as doctors, lawyers, or executives. I also expected a much higher incidence of divorce. The divorces were there, but certainly not at the 40-50 percent rate that prevails nationally. Although economic factors might contribute to a smaller number of children from divorced families seeking admission, I also suspect that the emotional difficulties of such children might interfere with their ability to achieve at the level needed to gain admittance to a top university.

My students during the 1980s and '90s have shown strengths that were missing from my generation (baby boomers attending college in the '60s). Today's students are much more career-minded and organized. I am still amazed when announcing a test or assignment to see students whip out academic planners and carefully write down the dates—especially since I myself have yet to buy an organizer! This attention to goals appears at an early age. High school students who attend the university's summer program can already tell you with great certainty what they will major in and what job they want after college. As a freshman, I barely knew what courses interested me.

But the students' intense focus does have drawbacks. They tend to be very pragmatic, even narrow, in choosing courses. They approach education as consumers, favoring something career-related or entertaining, instead of a course that expands perspectives or challenges one's worldview. The need to be entertained reflects a generation strongly influenced by television and the media. Jokes, movie references, and a certain degree of superficiality are expected both from textbooks and lectures. Learning for its own sake seems to be disappearing.

Education has also become more narrow because of political correctness. While today's students appear more tolerant of differences than ever, some topics are clearly taboo. There are areas I could never approach as an instructor; not because I fear the dialogue that could follow, but because I am certain no

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dialogue *would* follow. For example, many autobiographical books on overcoming eating disorders testify to the role of religious beliefs. I hesitate to assign these works for fear of being accused of proselytizing. Stories about healing that credit psychotherapy or drugs are accepted, but not those that credit spirituality. Similarly, students in my seminar on the family avoid discussing the relative merits of traditional families versus more "modern" arrangements. It's as if students believe that the mere presence of alternatives to traditional families confirms that those alternatives are positive. Only after much research do students become open to the idea that perhaps everything is not relative, and that some family structures are less desirable than others.

The career-mindedness of today's students makes them quite concerned with the financial aspects of various jobs. Students constantly ask me if being a clinical psychologist provides the same job security and compensation that it used to, given the rise of managed care. I am often surprised to find that students know more about the financial benefits of various jobs than I do.

In my '60s generation, graduating from a good university essentially guaranteed a good job. Students could take the time to "find" themselves at school and explore various careers. Today, many students look at college diplomas as mere stepping stones for further training at a professional or graduate school.

Many students of this generation, particularly the women, feel more constrained in their opportunities than we did. The idea of marrying, having a family, and *then* pursuing a career is hardly considered. Men often help make this an impossibility by stating that they expect their wives to have careers and contribute income before thinking about children. Many young men today also ignore the possibility that their wives might want to stay home to care for their children when they're young.

For this generation, financial security gained through a career often seems to substitute for a lack of emotional security. Although the divorce rate among my students is lower than the national norm, it is still much higher than when I was in college. Many students also come from families struggling with multiple sources of stress, something which my psychologically minded students are more aware of than my generation was. Several students have been in therapy, and some have been going to sessions longer than I've been a therapist. They all seem to know the latest psychological jargon, and they use it to discuss themselves and others. This inner focus leads more often to acute sensitivity to one's own feelings than to productive examination of one's guiding principles. Indeed, it sometimes leads to the *construction* of mental problems rather than their avoidance. Some female students, for example, feeling depressed and concerned about their sexuality and eating behaviors, wonder if they have been sexually or emotionally abused as children—though there's no evidence they have been. Their belief in this possibility creates all sorts of problems for them and their families.

Given that students at my university are selected by their mental fitness, I'm surprised by the increasing number who seem to be struggling with severe emotional problems: depression, eating disorders, substance abuse, sexual confusion, difficulties with family and relationships. The incidence of these problems certainly surpasses anything I encountered 25 years ago.

When I was in college, the widespread bulimia and anorexia that seem to plague so many young women today did not exist. Now many women are taught bulimic behavior in sororities, where group purging sometimes occurs. Some students tell me that many of their friends engage in regular vomiting to keep weight off.

Today eating disorders seem to reach beyond people from dysfunctional families; now there are also cultural influences. Extreme thinness has become an indicator of high social class and achievement, as well as attractiveness. This career-minded generation seems to think that women with full hips and breasts are less intelligent and likely to succeed: If one is not disciplined enough to be thin, one will not be perceived as competent. The fat that comes with maternal fertility is to be hidden, not valued. Ripe, soft women whose bodies lend themselves to comforting and cuddling are no longer celebrated. The men of the present generation reinforce this view. In my classes, several men have suggested that their future wife's economic role in the family will be more important than her emotional and reproductive role.

I also see a sharp rise in the incidence of depression among my students. This is the Prozac generation, with many on some type of anti-depressant. College psychological services often have long waiting lists. Perhaps mood disorders haven't increased in this generation so much as our ability to identify them and talk about them. But I personally suspect that real increases in depression have occurred. In a recent study my students and I conducted, we found that 30 percent of our sample of 107 female and 57 male Gen Xers reported current, significant symptoms of depression. Two-thirds of all respondents reported an incident of depression at some point in their lives, with half of those being moderate to severe depressions. Students whose parents had divorced were twice as likely to show symptoms of depression as students from intact families (48 to 25 percent). And in our study only 19 percent of the students came from divorced homes—far below the national rate.

Divorce seems to be having lasting effects on Gen Xers, particularly in producing depression. In males and females both, losses experienced as a child of divorce often produce lifelong negative effects. Yet because divorce is now so common, our society persists in treating it as a normal occurrence. (This is like saying that malaria in Africa is normal because of its prevalence there.) Following this cultural bias, Gen Xers often believe that divorce should be no big deal—especially if they themselves have been fortunate enough to avoid its shattering effects.

The fallout from divorce is evident in my classes on psychopathology and the family. My best students, emotionally and academically, tend to come from traditional families—that is, non-

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When children grow up without basic trust that their parents will respond to them, they never develop any real intimacy, and their relationships with others tend to remain shallow.

divorced families where the mother stayed home with the children at least until they were in school. As a working mother myself, I initially wanted to deny this pattern, but after years of seeing it I now believe such families provide the best environment for children.

Students from divorced families not only suffer more eating disorders, depression, and substance abuse, they also tend to have difficulties in their relationships with others. I particularly see this in women who feel let down by their fathers. One student's parents divorced because her father failed to give up cocaine. Despite being extremely attractive and intelligent, she suffers from feelings of unworthiness. How could she be of any value when her father chose cocaine over staying with her and her mother? This young woman despairs over her poor relationships with men and doubts whether she will ever marry and have children.

Another young woman I know idolized her father as a child. He was involved in all the children's activities, coaching and caring for them in this apparently tight-knit family. She felt severely betrayed, however, when her father left for a younger woman. This lovely student struggled with depression throughout college and adopted a lesbian lifestyle rather than trust in men again. I know other women who have similarly embraced lesbianism after abusive relationships with males, either fathers or spouses.

Divorce affects students even when it occurs during the college years. One student's parents separated during his senior year, and he played the role of go-between, carrying messages from one house to another. During his last semester he spent much time traveling from university to home to arbitrate, which caused him great stress and unhappiness. As a student of mine he had to write weekly papers. One week, he stole another student's paper from my mail box, paraphrased it poorly, and then turned both in. I recognized what had happened, and he eventually confessed, which resulted in his flunking the course and both parents' having to come here to sort things out. For a bright student already accepted at medical school, the whole affair seemed like a clear cry for help—and a clear cry to his parents to stay together.

It's not just divorce that feeds increasing depression within Generation X. I have students whose parents have simply neglected them; parents who put their own desires before their children; parents who have provided their children with high levels of material goods instead of attending to their emotional needs. When children grow up without basic trust in their parents' ability to understand and respond to them, they never develop any real intimacy, and their relationships with others tend to remain shallow.

Many of my students have difficulty developing relationships of true depth. Sometimes they are afraid to expect anything from others because they have been disappointed so frequently by their families. One student reports that his parents made promises but continually broke them. Another says her self-respect faltered when her divorced parent remarried; she felt excluded from the new family, and the daughter from the new union received all the attention. A third student's father had an affair, and although the family stayed intact, the student developed a badly shaken view of marriage and parenting; he wondered if he could ever trust a partner.

Some students feel they were never truly nurtured by their mother and father. In certain cases this is because they were in day care or raised by a nanny. One student respected her physician mother, but her main attachment was to her nanny. She told me she felt depressed and conflicted over what direction her own life should take: career or family. Combining the two, she felt, was impossible. Another student declared she would definitely stay home with her children, because although her parents' putting her in day care had been "good for them, it was horrible" for her.

Still another student reported she had to play the role of parent to her single mother—calling her by her first name, telling her what styles to wear, and advising her on boyfriends, several of whom were abusive. This student found herself repeating the same pattern and ending up in relationships with abusive men. Similarly, a child of two working parents felt her needs were ignored because she was left to guide her own siblings in her parents' absence. Having already played the role of mother and never the role of child, she doubted whether she would ever have a family of her own. A student whose parents divorced early struggled with substance and alcohol abuse for years, without the knowledge of either parent. Though he was often high when he was with them, they simply took no notice. During this time he had multiple sexual relationships, none of them lasting. The stories go on and on.

Divorce, single-parenting, excessive materialism, and parental selfishness have thrust many of our children out into the world before they are ready to leave the family. These students often present themselves as precociously mature, compulsively self-reliant, and independent. This façade, however, often masks yearnings for affection and direction.

When my oldest son was three, one of his favorite books was *The Runaway Bunny* by Margaret Wise Brown. In this classic tale a baby bunny warns his mother that he is about to run away. She reassures him by replying that she'll find him wherever he goes. This is a wonderful book for three-year-olds struggling for the first time with questions of autonomy versus trust. But that same struggle exists throughout our lives, surfacing with particular strength in adolescence. My 16-year-old recently inquired

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SEX CODES on campus

By Arthur Levine and Jeanette Cureton

Our survey of colleges across the nation found that traditional dating is largely dead on campus. It has been replaced by group dating, in which men and women travel in unpartnered packs. "Large groups are seen as low risk, making for a safer emotional environment," explained a student at the University of Northern Iowa.

Of course, there are exceptions. At Catholic University, the dean of students, Kate Zanger, talked about the small number of couples who meet during the first days of college and go everywhere. They are joined at the hip. "Velcro buddies," she called them.

At a few schools we studied, relationships were more acceptable to older students. A woman at Drake University explained that the diversity of students on campuses today means "people are in different life stages. The seniors are more into relationships. I mean, people go out a lot but do not want serious relationships. There is a lot of sex. College is about casual sex."

Students talked a lot about sex. They commonly told us intimate details about their sex lives. One student at Boston University cried, and admitted she was a virgin.

Students used a special vocabulary to describe sexual relations, including such terms as scoping, clocking, hooking, scamming, scrumping, mashing, and shacking. The terms and their definitions varied, but neither the terms nor their meanings were romantic. Scamming, for instance, received these definitions:

> "Running a game on someone."
> "Watching—you know, elevator eyes."
> "Checking out members of the opposite sex. If you're lucky, you end up in bed."
> "Hitting on someone. Sometimes it is just to get to know them."
> "Group dating leading to sex after drinking."
> "Trying to get girls to go to bed."
> "Going to a party with the intention of meeting up with somebody, though not necessarily sexually, especially women. But men always have sex on their mind."

Whatever it's called, the alternative to traditional dating is developing a sexual relationship that is not intended to be emotional. On a given night, the typical pattern is to go to a bar or party off campus, get drunk, and end up back in someone's room. A student at the University of the District of Columbia explained, "People will stand in the bar just waiting to be taken at the end of the night."

Students did not like to discuss the sensitive topic of gender roles. A group of women at Wellesley spoke of their struggle to deal with the conflict between their political agenda—getting ahead and, therefore, "feeling more anti-male"—and their personal agenda—building heterosexual relationships.

Males were neither as eloquent nor as thoughtful in describing gender differences, though conversation abounded on sexuality. Women were sometimes described as "angry." The word *feminazi* was used periodically. (Both men and women attributed negative connotations to the word *feminist,* which was thought too strident and "too dated.") There was talk of not understanding women—"they talk a different language"; "they think different[ly]." Men discussed threats they felt from women in the work place and the classroom. At the University of Texas at Arlington, the dean observed, "I see a lot of trauma, especially for young white men. Men find a macho conviviality in alcohol, and this leads to angry feelings and abuse, especially sexual abuse." Fifty-five percent of the schools we surveyed had increases in sexual harassment reports, and 41 percent experienced rises in acquaintance rape and sexual assault.

In the main, students have decided to ignore their gender differences and the tensions they bring. The easiest way of accomplishing this has been to squeeze romance and emotion from sexual relationships, which leads to a propensity to trade quality for quantity.

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Condoms appear to be omnipresent on campus. They can be obtained in residence halls and fraternity houses, in restrooms and laundry rooms, in health centers and student unions. At Carleton College, they are provided along with suntan oil in "vacation kits" issued to students before spring break. At Catholic University, they were slipped into copies of the student newspaper. Are they used? Who knows? Students on several campuses, including Wellesley, Berkshire Community College in Massachusetts, and the University of Texas at Arlington, told us bowls of free condoms are emptied every day.

Although almost all students (91 percent) said they are well informed about what constitutes "safe sex," only half of those sexually active said they always practiced it. Another fifth say they sometimes do. Interviews with both chief student affairs officers and undergraduates reveal a limited student understanding of safe sex, ambiguity about the line between health risks and issues of morality, and a sense of almost complete invincibility. The dean at Concordia College in Oregon observed, "I think 12- to 22-year-olds still feel indestructible."

"The thinking here is that sex is fairly safe—that nice white kids don't get AIDS," noted a student at Carleton. Others said students are talking about AIDS or are choosing partners more carefully. A sophomore at Los Angeles Valley College laughed when we asked if people's patterns of behavior had changed. "Last year we ran a survey," he replied. "The majority said they have changed in practice, but they also said they have not changed in the number of partners they have. Most said five or more." When questioned about the effect of AIDS on her campus, a student at Boston University replied, "I think AIDS means you look at people differently, that you observe them for a while." A number of students suggested the waiting period was until the second date.

A student at the Illinois Institute of Technology put it all into perspective: "I'm more afraid of getting shot on the way home than of getting AIDS." He was scared and angry. He wanted things to be different. As a fellow student put it, "We're further and further away from the college life our parents had."

Of course, current students may envision a collegiate life far more romantic than the one their parents actually experienced. But today's undergraduates do live a life the previous generation could not have imagined. They come to college more damaged psychologically, and they socialize differently, often alone or away from campus. Binge drinking, which frequently mixes with sex, is on the rise. More work at jobs and live off campus, which contributes to their social isolation. And traditional dating, as well as intimacy, have all but disappeared.

This is adapted from the forthcoming book When Hope and Fear Collide *by Arthur Levine and Jeanette Cureton.*

Growing Respect for Saving Sex

Chelsea Clinton is the most famous undergraduate at Stanford, but Rafael Nendel-Flores may be the most interesting. Nendel-Flores, a senior majoring in political science, currently heads two rather different campus organizations—the College Democrats and True Love Waits.

If it seems odd that a self-described liberal is spearheading efforts to promote saving sex for marriage, welcome to the 1990s, where a growing number of freethinkers are winding up in virgin territory.

Indeed, data from the National Center for Health Statistics show that the percentage of high schoolers reporting they've never had sexual intercourse increased from 41 percent in 1989 to 48 percent in 1995. And over the last five years, more than 500,000 of today's college-aged population have signed True Love Waits cards committing themselves to saving sex until marriage.

To be sure, sexual promiscuity is still rampant among today's young people. As Yale graduate student David Legg reports, "Many of my classmates are surprised to learn that I am a virgin—they just assume that anyone who would have the opportunity to take a girl to bed would do so."

But Lakita Garth, a former University of Southern California cheerleader who speaks regularly to young people about the benefits of waiting, says she detects growing interest in chastity, even among the sexually experienced. A recent survey of teenagers by the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States helps to explain why: a majority of all sexually experienced respondents wish they had waited to have sex.

While Nendel-Flores is glad he doesn't have to worry about regrets, he still gained his appreciation for self-discipline the hard way. "My mother had me when she was 19, and she divorced when I was young," he says. "I have seen some of the pain that comes when young people rush into things—and I don't want to do anything that might be an obstacle to me having a happy marriage some day."

That Nendel-Flores' commitment to chastity grew out of his experience in a broken home will no doubt surprise some. Research compiled by the National Institute for Healthcare Research (NIHR) shows that young people who grow up in single-parent households are more likely to engage in early sexual activity than youth from intact families.

Studies compiled by NIHR also show that young people who frequently attend religious services are more apt to save sex for marriage. Kimberly Bland, a 1997 University of Texas graduate now serving as a Witherspoon Fellow at the Family Research Council in Washington, says her commitment to chastity is an extension of her Christian faith. She adds that a number of her college friends—including a young Buddhist woman who grew up in Malaysia—also have religious motivations for saving sex until marriage.

Whatever their motivation, Nendel-Flores senses young people committed to chastity are quietly winning the respect of their peers. When asked how his classmates and Sigma Phi Epsilon fraternity brothers view True Love Waits, Nendel-Flores says, "There are some who consider us prudes, but most seem to view our choice as a good one—even if they say they lack the willpower to make the same commitment."

Legg agrees. "In a strange sort of way, I think many sexually active students sense that they are missing out on something," he says. "At a certain level, I think many recognize there is something empty about sex without commitment."

—***William R. Mattox, Jr., is on the board of contributors of*** USA Today.

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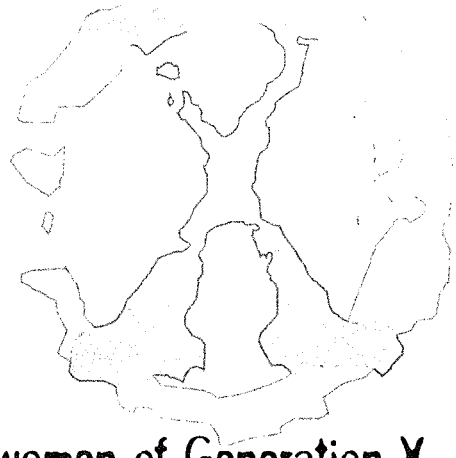
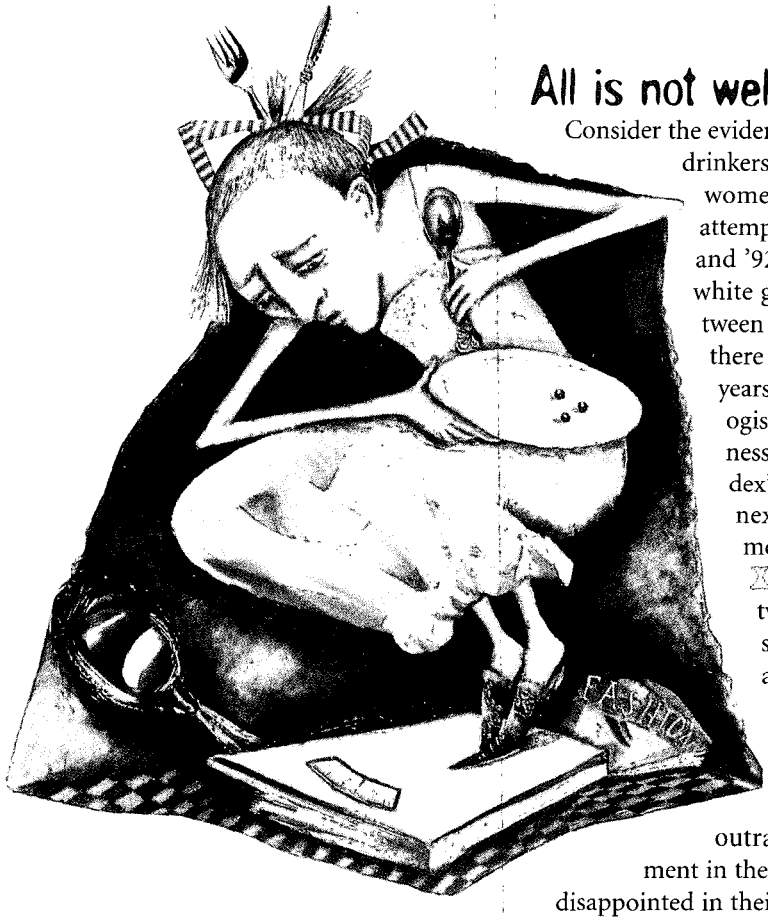
the GIRLS of GEN X





All is not well with the women of Generation X.

By Barbara Dafoe Whitehead

Consider the evidence: Close to 40 percent of college women are frequent binge drinkers, a behavior related to date rapes and venereal disease. Young women suffer higher levels of depression, suicidal thoughts and attempts than young men from early adolescence on. Between 1980 and '92, the rate of completed suicides more than tripled among white girls and doubled among black girls. For white women between 15 and 24, suicide is the third leading cause of death ⁂ And there is evidence that young women are less happy today than 20 years ago. Using data from a survey of high school seniors, sociologist Norval D. Glenn has tracked the trends of reported happiness for young men and women. Since 1977, the "happiness index" has been trending downward for young women. (See chart next page.) Moreover, this decline is specific to girls. Young men's reported happiness has risen slightly over the same time. ⁂ Gen X women seem to experience the greatest discontent in two areas: Men, and their own bodies. Young women can find sex easily, but they have a hard time finding a caring and sexually faithful partner who will share their lives. Marline Pearson, who teaches at a large community college in Madison, Wisconsin, recently asked her women students to identify the greatest obstacle facing women today. The difficulty of "finding and keeping a loving partner" topped the list, outranking obstacles such as job discrimination, sexual harassment in the workplace, and domestic violence. ⁂ In addition to being disappointed in their intimate relationships with men, women are discontented with their own bodies. Healthy young women of normal weight describe themselves as fat or "gross." At puberty or even earlier, girls begin restricting what they eat. Two-thirds of ninth-grade girls report attempts to lose weight in the previous month. Of course, dieting is not new, but Gen X women do more than watch calories. Some starve themselves. Others eat but are afraid to keep food in their body. Instead, they chew their food and spit it out, vomit it up, or purge it with laxatives. Even more widespread than eating disorders is disordered eating, the restrictive and obsessive monitoring of food consumption. According to some experts, most college women today suffer from disordered eating. Indeed, it is the rare college or university today that does not have at least one specialist in eating disturbances on its counseling staff. According to one survey, the number-one wish among young women, outranking the desire to end homelessness, poverty, or racism, is to get and stay thin.

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These conditions afflict some of the most privileged young women of the generation. This comes as a shock to older, baby-boom women. After all, college-educated Gen X women—the first full beneficiaries of the achievements of the women's movement—have grown up with more freedom, opportunity, and choice than their mothers or grandmothers. More to the point, they have been the beneficiaries of what might be called the girlhood project: the systematic and self-conscious effort to change the culture and prepare girls for lives as liberated, self-determined individuals with successful careers, sexual freedoms, and nearly limitless personal choice.

As a mother raising daughters in the 1970s and '80s, I remember the heady sense of possibility that accompanied the girlhood project. Sons were sons, but daughters were a social experiment. We gave them books like Marlo Thomas's *Free To Be You and Me* and read them stories in *Ms.* like "The Princess Who Could Stand on Her Own Two Feet." We dressed them in jeans and sneakers. We fought for their right to play Little League baseball. We pushed for more sex education in the schools. We urged them to please themselves rather than to please men.

Given our optimistic expectations, it is bitterly disappointing to reach the '90s only to discover that young women's happiness index is falling, not rising. What is happening to our bright and talented daughters?

Several feminist writers have grappled with this question. Therapist Mary Pipher was the first to describe the dark side of American girlhood in her best-selling book *Reviving Ophelia.* Pipher's case histories present a disturbing portrait of depressed and angry adolescent girls, self-mutilating, self-starving, self-loathing. Two more recent books offer a thoughtful analysis and criticism of the changing nature of American girlhood. In *Promiscuities,* her memoir of growing up fast and sexy in the '70s, Naomi Wolf describes the confused sexual awakening of privileged girls raised by self-absorbed parents too busy sampling the pleasures of the sexual revolution themselves to guide or protect their daughters. Historian Joan Jacobs Brumberg's *The Body Project: An Intimate History of Girlhood* meticulously documents the downward slide of girls' aspirations and ambitions over the past century, from improving one's character through good works to improving one's body through grueling workouts.

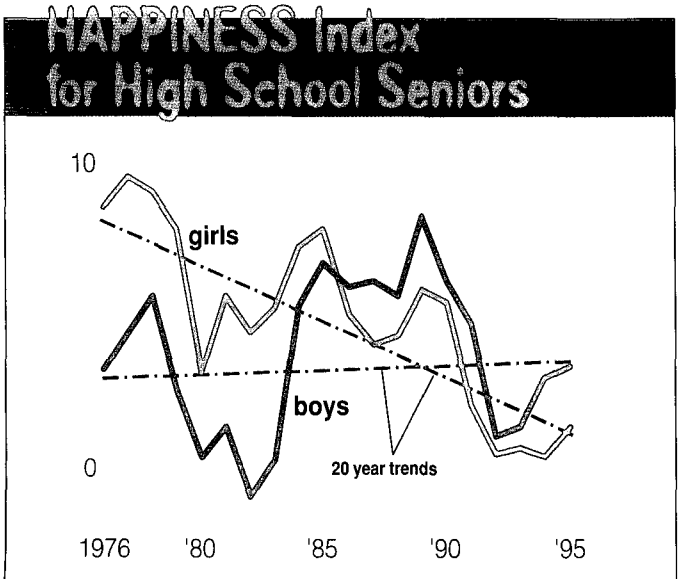
All three accounts point to one source of trouble: the passage between girlhood and womanhood. Growing up has never been easy for girls, of course, but it is more prolonged and perilous than ever before. Puberty can begin as early as eight; first sexual intercourse commonly occurs between 15 and 17; and women remain single and sexually active into their middle or late twenties. Forty-five percent of women who came of age in the 1950s and '60s were still virgins at age 19, and for many of those 19-year-old women, their first sexual intercourse occurred on their wedding night. But only 17 percent of women who came of age in the 1970s and '80s were virgins at 19. Since many Gen X women postpone marriage until their late twenties, few are likely to be virgins on their wedding night. As a consequence, girls are exposed to the problems associated with unmarried sex at an earlier age and for a longer period of time than a generation ago.

A rough consensus exists on some key factors that make coming of age more difficult for girls today: a cultural emphasis on thinness which makes the normal weight gains of puberty a source of anxiety and self-loathing; a media saturated with sexually explicit images and misogynistic messages; the sexual revolution and the availability of the Pill, which relieved men of any significant burden of responsibility for the negative consequences of unmarried sex; the high rate of family breakup and dysfunction; and the erosion of adult supervision. Puberty is now fraught with danger and anxiety.

Young girls are now at greater risk for early and traumatic sexualization, often by adult men. According to Brumberg, there have also been dramatic shifts in the social controls governing the sexuality of adolescent girls. Professional providers of contraceptive and abortion services have replaced mothers as the main source of authority on sexual matters. This shift has contributed to the demoralization of female sexuality and the decline in chastity.

At age 15, Naomi Wolf tells us, she followed the responsible, "healthy," medically approved approach to getting rid of her virginity. With her boyfriend, she went to a clinic to be fitted for a diaphragm, a business "easier than getting a learner's permit to drive a car." Yet as she prepared for the procedure, she missed a sense of occasion. "It was weird to have these adults just hand you the keys to the kingdom, ask 'Any questions?', wave and return to their paperwork.... The end of our virginity passed unmarked," she writes, "neither mourned or celebrated."

Both Brumberg and Wolf are critical of the medicalization of girls' sexuality, with its emphasis on sexual health and self-management. (In the words of one sex education book, the goal for girls is to stay "healthy, safe, and in charge.") This places an unsupportable burden on young girls to protect themselves from predatory males. It also neglects girls' emotional needs for affiliation and affection, as well as their desire to have their sexuality invested with some larger meaning.



Note: Teens were asked to rate their own personal happiness. Index represents the percentage answering "very happy" minus those saying "not too happy."

Source: Special tabulations of national "Monitoring the Future" data done by Norval Glenn of the University of Texas.

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The demoralization of sexuality has coincided with growing unhappiness among girls.

These revisionist-feminist writers seek to remoralize girlhood, but not with the morals of yesteryear. Instead, they call upon older women to take responsibility for (and pride in) younger womens' sexuality, and they look to senior women and especially mothers to instruct girls more actively. This advice overlooks at least one crucial point. Older women are already involved in shaping the passage to womanhood and have been for more than 20 years. It is feminist women who write and edit books and magazines for teen girls. It is feminist women who have fought for abortion rights and the end to parental consent laws for girls. It is feminist women who have championed the right of girls to be as sexually free as boys. In short, these older women are the authors of the girlhood project. Are they now the right parties to repair the damage done?

The girlhood project was rooted in rebellion against traditional conceptions of girlhood. According to feminist critics, earlier generations of girls were raised primarily to be wives and mothers. From puberty on, parents taught daughters to be modest, nice, nurturing, accomplished in the domestic arts, and virginal. Since a young woman's virginity was a moral as well as a physical condition, family and church conspired to keep women pure.

Whether this is actually a fair summary of prevailing American sex roles prior to the 1960s is dubious. Even in the 1830s, Alexis de Tocqueville commented that Americans "have calculated that there was little chance of repressing in woman the most tyrannical passions of the human heart and that it was a safer policy to teach her to control them herself. Unable to prevent her chastity from being often in danger, they want her to know how to defend herself, and they count on the strength of her free determination more than on safeguards which have been shaken or overthrown.... Unable or unwilling to keep a girl in perpetual ignorance, they are in a hurry to give her precocious knowledge of everything."

In any case, the activists who undertook the girlhood project declared war on what they viewed as Victorian double standards for boys and girls, which they blamed for unhappy marriages and unfulfilled female desires. Feminists called instead for a new single sexual standard—based on traditional boyhood. In their play and pursuits, little girls were to be made more like boys. Among liberal elites, a traditionally feminine daughter became a mild social embarrassment, while a feisty tomboy daughter was a source of pride.

In everything from sports to sex, girls gained experiences that were once off-limits. Twenty-five years ago, only one in 27 high school girls participated in team sports. By 1994, one in three did. A copy-the-boys approach was also applied to sexuality. Increasingly, the timing of girls' sexual awakening resembled boys. Today, the most frequent age of first intercourse is 17 for girls, 16 for boys. In frequency of intercourse and number of sexual partners, the traditional gender gap is closing as well. Modesty has also disappeared. Girls can be as profane, sexually frank, and "horny" as the guys. "Girls talk in the casual, expletive-laced manner stereotypically attributed to men," one 18-year-old college male writes. "Sex is discussed in all its variations, and bizarre or deviant sexual practices are often explored. This sort of talk is considered 'flirting.'"

Amidst its success at ending different standards for the sexes, the girlhood project has created new discontents. For one thing, it contributes to girls' unhappiness with their bodies. The tomboy ideal is demanding. It favors the few girls who are naturally wiry and athletic, and leaves the majority of girls displeased with their own shapes. The rapturous acclaim for tiny Olympic gymnasts and lithe skaters gives nonathletic girls still another reason to feel disappointed in their normal forms.

The more masculine body ideal shifts the locus of body shame from sexual organs to more visible body parts. Today's college women know how to find their clitoris in a mirror, but they can't bear to look at their "thunder thighs." Fashion magazines, which girls begin to read at age nine or ten and continue to consult well into their 20s, provoke body shame. Virtually all these magazines send one clear message: Your body is a mess. For example, the cover of the December 1997 *Jump*, a magazine for young teens, features stories entitled, "Body Bummers: How to go from feeling flawed to fab" and "Sizing up boobs." Such magazines tell girls to like themselves, whatever their size or shape, but they only feature flat-chested models who are six feet tall and 105 pounds. Indeed, a recurrent rumor among teenage girls is that these models are really boys.

Girls respond to body shame with rigid technocratic monitoring of their bodies. Again, the strenuous pursuit of feminine virtue has not disappeared but shifted location. The virtue of staying sexually pure has been replaced by the virtue of staying physically fit. In my corner of western Massachusetts, swarms of college women descend on the local health club each fall. They work out in the weight room or on the treadmills, their pony tails bobbing, their arms pumping, their faces sweaty and serious. Some read fashion magazines as they work out.

It does not take a degree in cultural anthropology to figure out that more is going on here than mere exercise. In girl culture today, "working out" is the new self-purification ritual, deeply invested with positive moral meaning. Good girls work out. Bad girls let themselves go. In the same way, eating has become a means of self-purification, and food itself has been moralized. There are good foods that one takes into the body and bad foods that one avoids or throws up. This helps explain why so many college women see "bad" foods as far more dangerous than drugs or alcohol, and why young women who drink and take recreational drugs will simultaneously refuse to eat anything but "pure" pesticide-free, fat-free organic food. Food is entirely divorced from pleasure and sociability while the other ingested substances are not.

If the girlhood project leads young women on a quest for a masculinized body,

Barbara Dafoe Whitehead is the author of The Divorce Culture.

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on the other HAND

Today's American girls are better educated and have more opportunities than any women in history. It is now girls who are opening a gender gap that threatens to leave boys behind as "the second sex." The country's current college freshman class is 55 percent female, 45 percent male. Women earn most of the nation's bachelor's and master's degrees, and Department of Education projections show women continuing to improve these advantages.

Feminist scholars present a different picture. Harvard University's Carol Gilligan tells us that girls lose their "voice" in adolescence; they become shy, "psychologically footbound," diffident, and "go underground." Gilligan relies on focus groups, anecdotes, and feminist "self-esteem" surveys, but her influential views do not fit the facts.

Data show that, far from being shy and demoralized, today's girls outdo boys in many critical areas. Girls get better grades. They are more engaged and serious intellectually. They read more. These allegedly timorous creatures now outnumber boys in student government and in debating clubs. More girls work on school newspapers and yearbook staffs. More girls are elected president of student organizations, and more are members of honor societies.

In 1995, 56 percent of all high school students in advanced placement classes were female. In academic year 1994-95, reports the Institute of International Education, 62 percent of American college students studying abroad were female. Physically, too, girls are doing better than ever. Today's girls have a life expectancy a full ten percent longer than boys.

That's the good news about girls. The bad news is that American girls are coming of age in a society in which crucial institutions have been badly weakened, rendering girls vulnerable in ways their grandmothers were not. Marriage, the family, and religious organizations do not offer them the safety and stability previous generations of girls and women took for granted. The social arrangements that once assigned to them a protected role as daughter, wife, or mother, have lost much of their clarity and force. To take one example, girls are at greater risk of being exploited or abused by young men who have no sense of gallantry or protectiveness toward women. Young women are freer, but it's not clear they are happier or more secure than previous generations.

The liberation movements, which did so much to help women gain their newfound freedoms, are proving unable to help repair the social institutions that women badly want and need to be more secure. Instead, women's groups remain implacably opposed to any social arrangements that smack of "patriarchy." Theorists like Carol Gilligan and activists like Gloria Steinem are not about to promote policies that sustain marriage, help keep families intact, or restore fathers to the home.

The ideas and programs of feminist leaders for advancing the interests of girls are unrealistic and increasingly eccentric. According to Gilligan, "Women's psychological development within patriarchal male-voiced cultures is inherently traumatic." She claims that at the onset of adolescence, American girls hit the "wall of Western culture" and get the message that "people...do not want to hear what girls know." For Steinem, a major source of girls' troubles is their alienation from ancient goddess-centered religions. She recently initiated "Girls Speak Out," a program that brings girls and women together for two-day workshops where they are introduced to ancient ("pre-patriarchal") goddess-worshipping cultures. As Steinem explains, "Instead of just reading about ancient goddesses from all different cultures, we find replicas that girls can touch, pass around, make up stories about, and see how images of female power make them feel—just as girls in ancient times did."

Gilligan, Steinem, and the many other feminists who continue to promote a girls-are-silenced-and-shortchanged-victims philosophy are simply not up to the task of guiding contemporary girls. If I may borrow an image from Camille Paglia, putting your girl in the hands of contemporary feminist leaders is like sending your dog to vacation at the taxidermist. Most girls now reject the feminist label because today's feminism is proving so irrelevant and useless to average women.

Overall, there is reason for optimism about the condition of American girls. Our daughters are free and unprecedentedly wealthy and healthy. They are working hard at school, they play field hockey and basketball, and they have excellent economic prospects. Very few think of themselves as silenced or traumatized by a patriarchal system. Despite a chaotic and confusing social environment, most of the country's girls have native good sense and will find their way into a successful adulthood.

When I think of American girls, I think of my lovely 16-year-old niece and what she will be like ten years from now. I won't say I have no qualms, but on the whole I find that contemplating her future makes me smile.

—Christina Hoff Sommers is W.F. Brady Fellow at the American Enterprise Institute and author of Who Stole Feminism?

it also sets them on the path toward a more masculinized emotional life. There is now a single sex standard for men and women, but it favors Hugh Hefner, not Betty Friedan.

As much as young women's sexual lives resemble men's in the timing of first sex and the number of sex partners, their reasons for having sex remain very different. The nation's most comprehensive and up-to-date sex survey reports that 48 percent of women have intercourse for the first time out of "affection for their partner," compared to only 25 percent of men. The researchers add, "Young women often go along with intercourse the first time, finding little physical pleasure in it, and a substantial number report being forced to have intercourse. These facts reflect the dramatic costs for young women, and they seem to be increasing as young women have intercourse earlier in the life course."

Even when young women deliberately set out to lose their virginity, they

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often experience feelings of sadness, emptiness, and disappointment afterward. Women may want affection, tenderness, and commitment in their relationships, but what they actually get is "more naked, loss-filled sex," says Warren Schumacher, who teaches courses in marriage and the family at the University of Massachusetts. Thus, though the girlhood project prepares girls for sex, it says nothing to them about love.

With the decoupling of sex and love, intense passion and romance are vanishing. Loveless sex has become a routine pleasure of the single life, on a par with a good movie. Sexless love is also part of singlehood. According to psychologist Joanna Gutmann, a counselor at the University of Chicago, asexual couplings are increasingly common. Gen X men and women may share beds without ever having sex, or they may start out in a sexual relationship and then eventually shift to a comfy, asexual living-together relationship for the sake of companionship and convenience. Passionate, romantic love between young men and women is increasingly rare, says Gutmann.

By the time they reach their late twenties, many educated women in urban areas complain that all the good men are "taken" (or not available because they are gay). Some single women find it easier to hook up with different people for different purposes. "It doesn't make sense to rely on one person to meet all your needs," one 28-year-old woman told me. "Our generation diversifies. We might have one person for sex, one to go out club-hopping, another to share thoughts and feelings." Comradeship has replaced courtship and marriage as the preferred path to intimacy. To use a political metaphor, the aspiration to union has been abandoned for the more modest goal of confederacy.

Two decades after the girlhood project began, it may be judged not only by its aspirations but also by its decidedly mixed results. In important respects, it has improved the lot of girls. Adolescent girls now receive more serious mentoring attention from important men in their lives, including fathers, teachers, and coaches. Their participation in sports prepares them for a work world still largely shaped by male codes of conduct rooted in competition, combat, and conquest. More importantly, they are no longer bound by the marriage-and-motherhood script. They are free to follow their own desires as they make choices about their work and private lives.

At the same time, the girlhood project has shortchanged young women. The passage from girlhood to womanhood now entails a remarkably strenuous effort to transcend biology. Most girls are not cut out to be tomboys forever. Too often now, normal female physical and psychological maturation is taken as a problem, a worrisome sign that girls are "falling behind boys."

Today, all that is naturally womanly—especially anything related to childbearing—is treated by elites as something to be managed, minimized, and somehow overcome. Nearly all women still want motherhood, but they have grown up with the idea that it is a trauma that must be "worked into" a career. The only trouble-free times in the female life course are now defined as the periods when women are least connected to their womanliness: in childhood and again in old age. A woman's life between ages 10 and 60 has been medicalized and problematized, with a host of products and technologies like birth control and abortion, hormone replacement therapy, and cosmetic surgery being offered to ward off or manage what is natural. Is it any wonder that Gen X women look at adult life with a measure of fear and trembling?

The attempt to remake American girlhood is deeply connected to feminist aspirations. So how are feminists responding to signs of trouble popping up among Generation Xers? Many are ringing alarm bells—and blaming society or men. Others are urging their fellow feminists to offer more personal guidance to the young. Liberal women, say Brumberg and others, must make a new commitment to girl advocacy.

More mentoring is a worthwhile goal, but the state of American girlhood won't improve unless older feminists acknowledge their own responsibility for creating some of the difficulties today's young women face. To begin, women may have to confront their own anxieties about body image. Many American girls now grow up with mothers who are dieting, working out, and always complaining about their bodies. Indeed, it is often

mothers who feel shame over their daughters' weight gains in puberty and rush their 11-year-olds to a fat camp or a pediatrician for a medically supervised diet.

Older feminist women, not the patriarchy, also edit the fashion magazines girls so eagerly consult. Nowhere else on a newsstand will you find as much body worship and emphasis on dress and dieting, or as many models made up like drug-addled prostitutes, or as many articles romanticizing casual sex. The same magazines are obsessed with money, things, and the trappings of celebrity. They assume every girl is focused on her self and her sex life, rather than her family and community, and they ignore any topic of civic, religious, or intellectual seriousness.

In addition, the firsthand models that today's girls grow up with are too often no more responsible or inspiring than this magazine fare. Revisionist feminists themselves acknowledge that it is the nice progressive parents of Gen Xers who turned self-actualization, divorce, live-in lovers, the drug habit (stretching from pot to Prozac), latch-key childhood, New Age therapies, and feel-good morals into mass phenomena.

Older women who aspire to be advocates to today's girls ought to consult the desires of the girls themselves. They will find that, more than sex, girls are interested in love and the business of finding a male worthy of love. Contemporary liberal institutions give these girls hundreds of books and articles devoted to the mechanics of sex, and many warnings about the dangers of penises not wearing condoms, but almost no information about how to make a life with the boys attached to them.

Older women must recognize that their feminist critique of 1950s girlhood, which inspired the effort to remake female upbringing, may not fit the realities of girls' lives now. Maybe the problem then was the tyranny of the feminine mystique. But the solution today is not a more unnatural and therefore even more tyrannical masculine mystique.

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Divorce, single-parenting, excessive materialism, and parental selfishness have thrust many Gen Xers out into the world before they are ready to leave the family.

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what I would do if he went to college at the university where I teach. It was as if we were reading Margaret Wise Brown again—he testing, me reassuring.

He: *"You'll probably come and visit me all the time."*

Myself: *"Well, I'll certainly come and visit"*

He: *"I simply won't tell you where I'm living."*

Myself: *"I'll look you up in the directory."*

He: *"I'll have an unlisted phone number."*

Myself: *"I'll still find you."*

He (smiling): *"You probably will!"*

Unfortunately, among Gen Xers, signs that one is strongly attached to another are often interpreted negatively, evidence of a "dependent, needy, immature" personality. Children past a certain age are supposed to be embarrassed to be seen with their parents. They are praised for demonstrating independence from their families. This pressure is reinforced not only by schools (which, after sixth grade, tend to discourage parental involvement) but also by the larger culture.

Even parents conspire in this. Once their children reach adolescence, parents often develop the attitude that their offspring no longer need the monitoring or personal interactions they received when younger. This erroneous belief has fed drug abuse, sexual experimentation, and delinquency. Research clearly shows that the adolescents best protected from these dangers are those who continue to spend time with and receive guidance from their parents.

Parental closeness is also important to academic success. The students of mine who have had the most success, academically and socially, are usually those closest to their parents. These are also the students who form the strongest friendships, who maintain long-term intimate relationships, who excel academically, who contribute to the community in altruistic ways.

Yet in counseling sessions today, I regularly encounter young people who insist that one's sense of well-being should never be dependent on others, and that self-sacrifice is a sign of weakness. Many Gen Xers have been led to believe that individuals should achieve fulfillment on their own, without links to spouse or family. Similarly, many believe that career decisions shouldn't be influenced by the needs of people close by.

This unwillingness to be "dependent" on anyone contributes to students' isolation and alienation. Many Gen Xers don't feel they have a safe harbor of loved ones they can pull into when life's storms blow. Among those whose parents divorced, or those who were simply emancipated early, there is a feeling that they have no family or community to which they can return. There may be a house, but no home. The runaway bunny of this generation has no mother who will follow him wherever he goes.

At times I have a great sense of despair for this generation. Once a young woman blurted out to me, "Of course, we're all depressed! What can you expect? After going to this university, my parents expect me to have a career. But if I go to grad school, I probably won't be done until I'm 30. Then I'll have to work to get established. By the time that happens, I'll be 35 and maybe too old to have children. All these people seem to have fertility problems who wait. And if I do have children, how can I take time off from my career without hurting it? I don't think day care is great, but I may not have a choice. So there I'll be working, not able to be with my kids. And besides, how am I even supposed to find someone to marry? I'm scared of getting AIDS, and half the time guys don't use condoms, and you can't trust what people tell you about who they've had sex with. Sometimes it seems easier not to get married at all—just get inseminated. One less thing to worry about. Just talking about this makes me feel depressed!"

But despite encounters like this, I find most Gen Xers are not pessimistic about their future. In our study that I mentioned earlier most students said they were very optimistic about their future. Of the 164 students surveyed, all but one reported that they planned to marry, and all but five said that they were planning to have children. Most expected to derive a great deal of satisfaction from their relationships with family, friends, and offspring. They also expected to do well on the job, both economically and otherwise.

Perhaps we have turned a corner. Therapists have long known that real change cannot occur until one experiences enough dissatisfaction to want a true alternative. Perhaps the hard personal experiences and dire predictions about the future surrounding Generation X have left their mark. Perhaps this generation will correct some of the trends in family breakdown, runaway careerism, and narcissistic behavior that have led to so much unhappiness.

Certainly one would never have thought that the flower children of the '60s would develop into the materialistic, achievement-driven consumers they became. Similarly, the young adults of the '80s and '90s may surprise us all in how they develop. I know that as my own anxiety over social trends has increased in recent years, I've become more willing to raise these hard questions in my classes. As a result, some of my students will think twice before cutting off their families, plopping an infant in full-time day care, or casually leaving a marriage with children. My students are becoming more aware of the power that close relationships have to ward off depression and heal an individual who has not had good parenting.

If these kinds of conversations are being repeated across the nation, perhaps family loyalty, selflessness, and intimacy will yet experience a revival among America's next generation.

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Welfare to Work

What Happens When Recipient Meets Employer?

BY AARON STEELMAN

IN 1996, CONGRESS CONVERTED FOUR FEDERAL welfare entitlements into Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, a program that will limit recipients to a lifetime eligibility of five years. The significance of this change has been widely debated.

While the Left calls the reform cruel and inhumane, critics on the right maintain it is but a Band-Aid on a hemorrhaging wound. For example, the new rules allow states to excuse up to 20 percent of their recipients from the five-year limit. Michael Tanner, director of health and welfare studies at the Cato Institute, argues that "by allowing states to exempt a fifth of their welfare population from the five-year lifetime limit, the act may actually motivate relatively few welfare recipients to go to work. After all, most welfare recipients already leave the program in less than five years. The group the one-fifth exemption is likeliest to shelter is the minority who are long-term recipients—precisely the people Americans are most unhappy to see on welfare."

Nevertheless, Tanner concedes that because it ends the federal entitlement to aid, "the act represents an important first step on the road to welfare reform." And if states decide *not* to exempt substantial numbers of recipients from the lifetime limit, then whole generations of people who have never worked will be forced to find jobs.

Preparing for that possibility, the Clinton White House has set up the Welfare to Work Partnership, an organization that tries to persuade companies to hire welfare recipients. So far, more than 2,100 companies have joined the Partnership and vowed to start hiring former recipients. Citing a Coopers and Lybrand survey, Partnership director Eli Segal claims that more than one-quarter of the country's 400 fastest-growing firms have hired workers from the welfare rolls, and that another 4 percent plan to do so soon.

The evidence, however, suggests that most companies aren't interested in welfare-to-work programs. According to the Associated Press, only eight of the country's 100 largest corporations have welfare-to-work programs at present. A poll by Wirthlin Worldwide found that just one percent of senior executives are "extremely interested" in such undertakings, and that 57 percent fear most former welfare recipients will be poor employees.

If welfare rolls are to be scaled down, individuals now getting checks must become productive workers. To find out how this can happen, *The American Enterprise* recently spoke with managers at several companies that have hired former welfare dependents, and asked them how success can be had in this undertaking.

PHILADELPHIA-BASED ARAMARK is one of the world's largest service companies. The firm's employees distribute magazines and books, serve food, supply uniforms, provide child care, and clean buildings for hundreds of companies, schools, and government agencies. More than 350 colleges and universities have contracted with ARAMARK to run their cafeterias and concession stands, as have major league teams like the Boston Red Sox, Philadelphia Flyers, and New York Mets. Perhaps more than any other U.S. company, ARAMARK has benefited from and contributed to the recent trend toward corporate outsourcing.

ARAMARK's chairman and CEO, Joseph Neubauer, joined the company in 1979. The business skills that previously helped him to become the youngest treasurer of a *Fortune* 500 company (PepsiCo), and the senior vice president of Wilson Sporting Goods, also helped him in his quick rise to the top position at ARAMARK. And for Neubauer, playing a role in the welfare-to-work movement is very much a business decision, not charity.

"We come at this from a perspective of what I like to call 'enlight-

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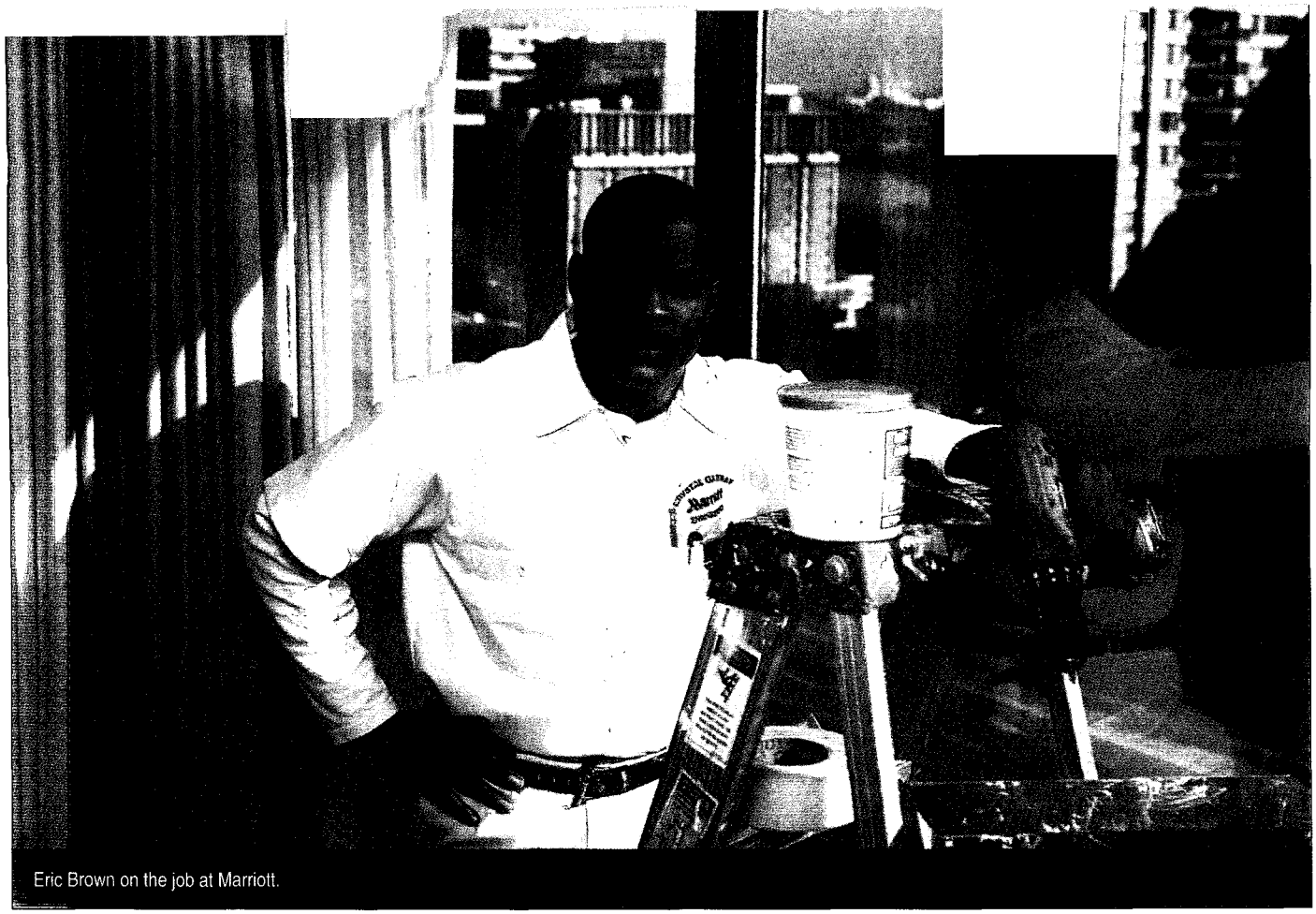

photograph by Dave Scavone

Eric Brown on the job at Marriott.

If they can get past the first 90 days on the job, Neubauer thinks welfare recipients frequently make more enthusiastic employees than the typical hire off the street.

ened self-interest,'" Neubauer states. "We can't afford to let our partners down. We have to deliver on our commitments. And most of our commitments involve people-intensive jobs. Companies like ARAMARK that provide services are constantly looking for people."

ARAMARK's total employment has been growing at eight to ten percent a year in a tight labor market, and some of the company's recent hires have been people just off of welfare. But according to vice president of human resources Brian Mulvaney, ARAMARK will continue to absorb welfare recipients even if the economy slumps. "In previous economic downturns, while they have affected the growth rates of some of our businesses, we continue to grow. I think the corporate outsourcing phenomenon is so powerful and makes so much economic sense that it is going to continue if we hit an economic downturn. ARAMARK is still going to have a need for entry-level employees."

In order to turn welfare recipients into service workers, Neubauer observes, you sometimes have to go the extra mile—at least in the beginning. "The soft skills in life are very important if you want to be successful with your job. And a lot of these people don't come to us with the soft skills that you and I learn as a child," he notes. "Many of them don't understand that if you're in line, for example, you wait your turn—you simply can't push your way to the front. In the environment in which many welfare recipients grow up, standing in line is not an accepted skill—pushing, or whatever it takes to get in front, is. That said, once you teach them the soft skills and reward them for practicing them, you see that they respond positively."

Indeed, if they can get past the first 90 days on the job, Neubauer thinks that welfare recipients frequently make better—or at least more enthusiastic—ARAMARK employees than the typical hire off the street. People who have held steady jobs before can become complacent, but for welfare recipients, "having a full-time job, belonging to an established group, being recognized as a team member, and receiving recognition and praise are enormously important and gratifying."

Other employers make this same point. Jack Donohue, who supervises Borg-Warner security guards in New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut, says that while he "didn't hold out much hope in the beginning," he has found that former welfare recipients often become very reliable employees. "When times weren't very good a couple of years ago, I saw lots of people interviewing here with master's degrees and very good work experience," says Donohue. "They did a good job but their attitude was, 'As soon as I find another job, I'm outta here. I've had enough with working security at all hours

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of the night.' The people that we've gotten off welfare, however, generally look at it much more as a career opportunity. Their expectation, their immediate horizon, is a little lower, and so they are much more apt to look at this as a big step. And you find that they stay with it and therefore begin getting supervisory jobs."

At ARAMARK, the key to successfully training and keeping employees in entry-level jobs has been decentralization. "What works in Baton Rouge won't necessarily work in Boston," says Neubauer. With more than 6,000 different "profit-centers" around the country, ARAMARK has hundreds of front-line managers who act, in effect, as the CEOs of their units. For example, while ARAMARK has no company-wide transportation subsidy program, units in areas with low unemployment rates have set up their own, as a way of attracting new employees.

Each new ARAMARK employee becomes part of a small, tight-knit group, where everyone depends on each other and where a slip-up can be very costly to everybody. In such a setting, co-workers have an incentive to make sure that new employees are properly trained and ready for the job, and newly hired welfare recipients, seeking the approval and praise that is so crucial to boosting their self-images, have an incentive to be responsible workers.

Alan Leo, 41, has taken advantage of ARAMARK's "if you do, you get" management approach. He began working for ARAMARK as a chef at age 17, having gained experience at his immigrant father's Chinese restaurant, and now heads the company's food services branch at Boston University. He says that "ARAMARK really allows us—the front-line managers—to run our businesses and make decisions about what's best at our locations. So we are able to respond to our employees. And there are lots of people on the management staff like me who have been here for several years and know what it's like to start at the bottom."

Leo says that whether a welfare recipient will be successful is largely dependent on the training he gets before coming to ARAMARK. "We work with a lot of agencies—particularly, a lot of private, ethnic groups and community groups—who work with people who are marginally employable. We don't ask them to do the technical training of running a cash register and things of that sort—we do that ourselves—but we do ask them to weed out those people who aren't ready for customer service and who are going to fail. They really do our pre-screening."

And when Leo finds an agency that can deliver suitable employees, he sticks with it. About ten years ago, one agency sent him "twenty Chinese women who were displaced garment workers. The agency trained them for about a month. And even though none of them could speak much English, I had worked with this organization before and I knew I could trust them. At least a dozen of those folks are still with us."

WHEN THE NATIONAL auto parts chain Pep Boys decided to hire welfare recipients to staff a distribution center in Indiana, reports manager Lori Milburn, it also looked for an outside agency to help screen candidates. The company eventually turned to Goodwill Industries. Of the 27 people Pep Boys hired last May (starting them at $8 an hour), 15 are still with the company, a ratio Milburn is quite happy with. "Our overall annual turnover rate is near 80 percent," she notes, and "the people who have stayed have proven to be very good employees." When hiring in Southern California, Pep Boys used the National Urban League to perform similar screenings for hiring ex-welfare recipients.

The Marriott Corporation has likewise relied on private and public agencies to screen welfare recipients. Janet Tully, director of Pathways to Independence, Marriott's welfare-to-work program, says that about 25 percent of applicants are accepted into the Pathways program. Frequently, she says, welfare recipients come to Marriott with the wrong attitude. "Many of the people entering the program have a victim mentality—it's always someone else's fault. We start off right away by telling them that they are the ones who need to be in control of the situation."

Marriott's program has had moderate success. About 90 percent of the people who enter the Pathways program—which provides 60 hours of classroom training and 120 hours of on-the-job training—eventually graduate. And 78 percent of Pathways graduates are still with Marriott after two years, compared to approximately 50 percent of Marriott employees as a whole. The program still is not profitable, however, because Marriott spends more than $5,000 training each Pathways graduate. "Let's not use the word 'profitable,'" says Tully. "'Possible' is the word. Our big dream is to get to be revenue neutral and offset our training costs. And if we didn't share the costs of training with other groups, this wouldn't even be possible at all, even though our retention rates are high."

So why does Marriott continue the Pathways to Independence program? Because, Tully says, "We think it has value. You have to realize we started this program eight years before welfare-to-work was popular. We are committed to it and that commitment comes from the top down. Mr. Marriott himself is strongly in favor of this program."

Among the biggest rewards of working with Pathways graduates, says Tully, is seeing how they progress professionally and personally: "After our six-week training session we have a graduation ceremony. In many cases, these are people who, when they first come into the program, you can't even get eye contact out of them—they're practically under the tables hiding. Six weeks later, they are up on a stage, behind a podium and microphone, some of them singing and praying. To me, the things they say are so eloquent in their simplicity. I still get goose bumps when I think of this one woman who came up and said, 'I'm so happy. My daughter went to school today and told her friends that her mommy went to work today. That makes me so proud. Christmas is coming, and I'm going to buy her presents with money I made myself.' There is never a dry eye in the house after one of those graduation ceremonies. And that's when we see the tremendous impact that our program is having."

ERIC BROWN, 33, GRADUATED from the Pathways program in April and is now a painter's helper at an Arlington, Virginia, Marriott. He had been receiving food stamps for about four months before entering the program and was living at a government-run homeless shelter in Washington, D.C., where he was in treatment for drug abuse. He now lives in a recovery house

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"I've seen the way that working has changed my children's opinions about me and themselves."

with seven other former addicts and says he has gotten his life on the right track for the first time in many years.

"To be honest, the money was important to me, but not as important as the self-esteem," says Brown. "I had been doing drugs for a long period of time, and I really needed to establish some things and get some accomplishments under my belt. I needed to feel like I was part of society again. Now, I have a lot of plans running around in my head about what I would like to do with my life and what my long-term goals should be. Before, I had no long-term goals and actually very few short-term goals."

Although he kicked his drug habit before coming to Marriott, Brown argues that "the work atmosphere helped me to stay clean. It reinforced the type of things I learned in treatment."

All 12 students in Eric Brown's class graduated, and 11 are still with Marriott—including Katrina Glover, a mother of two who had been on public assistance for two years before being admitted to the Pathways program. Glover now works in a Marriott kitchen. When asked how long she intends to stay at Marriott, she responds, "Oh, until about retirement time. I work with the chefs in the kitchen, and I tell them to watch out because I'm looking to take their jobs." Glover says that child care was a serious concern for her when she started the Pathways program, but she has worked out a suitable arrangement with a cousin.

Glover has relatives who are still on welfare. "I tell my sister that getting a job is something that you need to do for yourself and your children. Because I've seen the way that working has changed my children's opinions about me and themselves. My sister's told me that there are no jobs out there. But there are—you just have to want to do it. You have to want to do something and take control of your life. There's nothing free in this world."

Boscart Construction, located in Washington, D.C., began hiring welfare recipients for two reasons, says owner Barbara Turner. She needed unskilled workers. And, "as an African-American woman in a non-traditional industry, and as someone who was poor growing up, I've always felt that there's a real need for all of us to give back and help others." Five of Boscart's 22 employees are former welfare recipients, including her superintendent.

But Turner has also encountered some problems recently. "We're finding that a lot of people are not ready for the workforce. It's almost like the people who came to us early on were really the cream of the crop. And I think now we're reaching into that bottom two-thirds and Lord knows what we're going to find when we reach the very bottom. The bottom two-thirds realize that they're going to have to work, but I'm not sure that they understand what it really means to work." Turner says that earlier this fall her company interviewed a father of two who had been on welfare and was excited about the prospects of returning to the workplace. She hired him. "But the day before he was supposed to start, he paged my foreman and said that he couldn't make it for his first day of work. So my foreman told him, 'Well, I don't think you need to bother showing up any other day either.'"

Turner's sentiment is echoed by others. Janet Tully of Marriott argues that "the top 25 percent are employable, have been in and out of the system before, and will find jobs. Then there's the next 25 percent who have more difficulties. With effort, they can be employed. But, no question, there's that bottom 50 percent, and I don't know what's going to happen to them. They scare me. They are people who, under no circumstances, is any employer going to work with. You couldn't pay me enough to make me deal with those people." Several observers suggest that eventually there will have to be a second stage of welfare reform that deals with recipients with extreme problems.

One of the most important long-term solutions will be to change people's attitudes about being on the dole. Shirley Riley, who along with her husband and several of her children owns and runs the Nursery Hut, a day-care center in Washington, D.C., recalls that her mother received welfare payments for a short time after her father developed a drinking problem. But "she didn't stay on it for long. I respected what my mom was able to do, and I learned a lot from it. I never wanted my life to be run by the government. Even after my first husband was stabbed to death I never thought about going on public assistance."

"Helping people to find jobs is not going to be good enough," Riley argues. "We're going to have to change the attitudes of people, particularly young people. Because you have to understand that a lot of young people—kids 15 or 16 years old—who are getting ready to enter the workplace have never really been around people who have worked. A lot of times they haven't been around their fathers—or don't even know who they are—and their mothers have always been on welfare."

Riley has hired several former welfare recipients, provides free day care to people who are trying to leave the welfare rolls, and has set up her own non-profit group to run adult literacy and job-training classes and provide counseling to teenage parents and victims of child abuse. She has also recruited more than 50 Washington-area businesses into the Welfare to Work Partnership. "I have dreams for bigger and better things. You know, when you get to be almost 60, you start having dreams. I'm committed. I believe in this cause."

IF THE WELFARE-TO-WORK movement is successful, it will be due largely to the work of companies like ARAMARK, who have gotten involved because of tight labor markets and "enlightened self-interest." But it will also take the efforts of people like Shirley Riley—who want to work against the destruction the welfare state has wreaked on America's inner cities. "We need to teach people that life's possibilities are endless," says Riley, "that they need to do things for themselves. And they will be happier if they do."

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Little Miracles

How Churches are Responding to Welfare Reform

BY AMY L. SHERMAN

SUPPORTERS AND CRITICS OF WELFARE REFORM agree on at least one thing: Such a momentous change in many Americans' way of life won't succeed without a vigorous increase in outreach to the poor by private institutions, particularly churches. The first responses by churches, though they may not seem dramatic, offer cause for hope. In the relatively brief period since the federal government enacted welfare reform, thousands of church members around the nation have linked arms with individuals trying to make the shift from dependence to work.

Mississippi's Faith & Families program, the country's first major effort to match families on welfare with church members willing to provide financial, practical, and emotional support, has reached 350 families. More than half are now off of cash welfare, and the program has been copied in Louisiana, South Carolina, and Indiana.

In Texas, 219 churches have joined Pathfinder Families, helping 230 welfare recipients trying to find work under Texas's strict time limits.

In Michigan, approximately 50 churches in Ottawa County have helped 60 families exit welfare in just over a year through the Project Zero initiative.

Twenty-one congregations in Anne Arundel County, Maryland, have helped 30 families obtain jobs and leave public assistance through the Community-directed Assistance Program. Two other Maryland counties are reviewing the program with an eye toward possibly emulating it.

In San Diego, a coalition of churches has joined with the Department of Social Services to influence welfare recipients in four poor city neighborhoods. The churches also maintain a "help desk" at the downtown central welfare office that links needy individuals to private-sector resources. A coalition of churches in Charlotte, North Carolina, established a similar "help desk" last fall and is developing a mentoring program to aid newly employed welfare recipients in retaining their jobs.

Church-based welfare-to-work mentoring initiatives are also under development in Delaware, New Hampshire, and Washington state. And churches are responding to welfare reform in other ways, too. Some, like my own congregation in Charlottesville, Virginia, are pursuing a "neighborhood adoption" model, which focuses a church's financial and human resources on one low-income community. Others have begun "agency adoption" programs, in which churches make money, goods, and volunteers available to a particular social service agency, such as Child Protective Services. In Miami, a coalition of 70 churches has helped 700 elderly and disabled legal immigrants adversely affected by welfare reform. In short, throughout the country, churches of all sizes, stripes, and denominations—white and black, rich and poor, urban and suburban—are intentionally reaching out to needy families. While they have yet to make an appreciable impact relative to the nation's enormous welfare caseload, they have worked some miracles.

OTTAWA COUNTY, one of the six sites in Michigan's Project Zero, recently became the first locality in the United States to move every able-bodied welfare recipient into a job. Governor John Engler credited churches with much of the achievement. The county's Family Independence Agency (FIA), which administers welfare, contracted with a church-based nonprofit called the Good Samaritan Center in July 1996 to mobilize and train church volunteers to mentor and support families moving from welfare to work. The Center convinced nearly 60 churches—about 25 percent of the county's total—to sign up. One of its recruits, Harderwyk Christian Church, exemplifies the full-court press that the religious community can unleash when aiding struggling low-income families. Harderwyk took on six Project Zero applicants, including 24-year-old Rosalinda Ortiz.

Rosalinda had her first child when she was 14. She and her husband, a 15-year-old illegal immigrant, dropped out of high school, and eked out a sparse existence on his meager earnings until immigration authorities deported him. When she heard nothing more from him, Rosalinda got into another relationship, had four more children, and began col-

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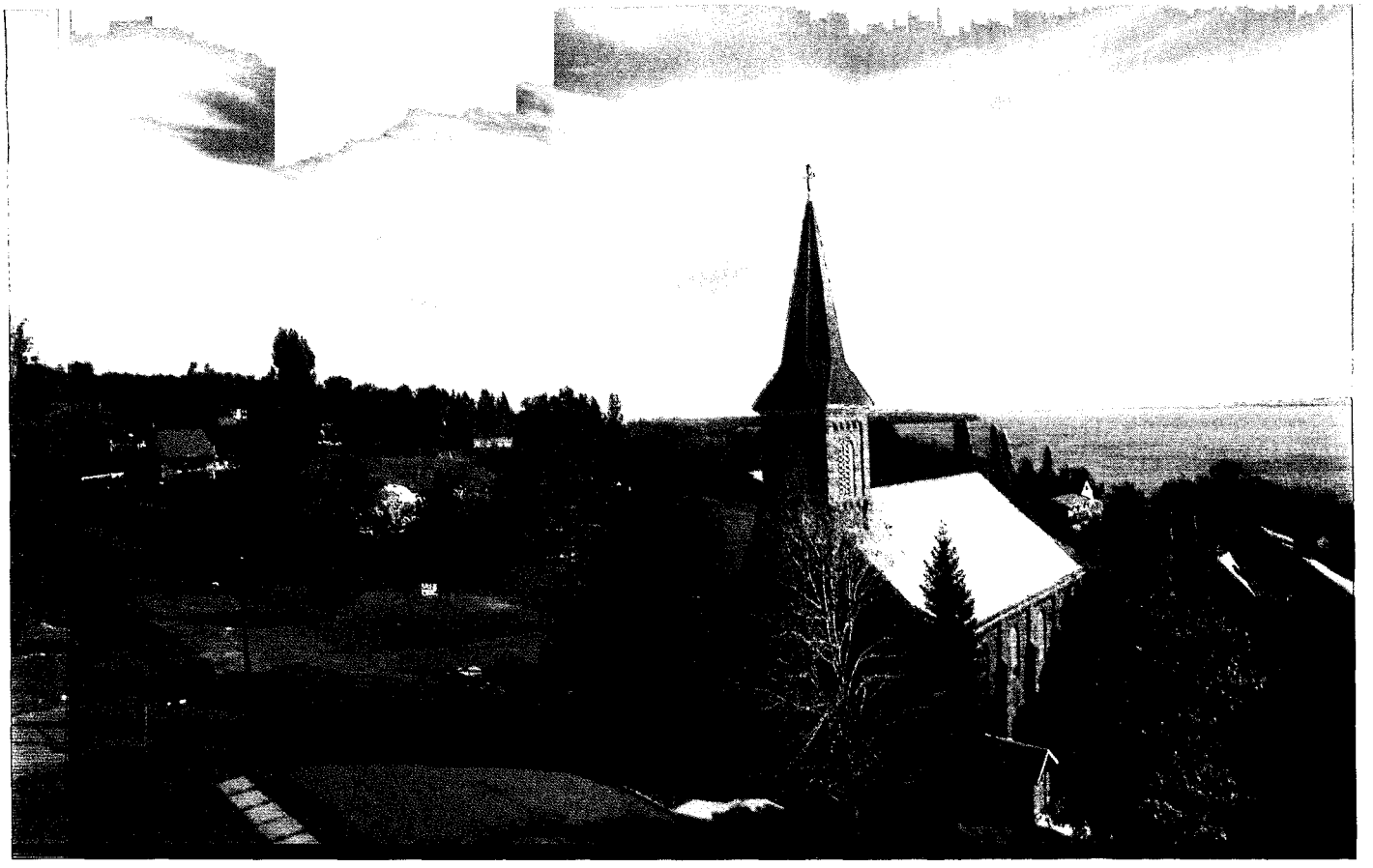

When church mentors rather than government officials are in charge, there is more urgency behind the drive to end welfare dependency.

lecting welfare. When that man turned abusive, Rosalinda turned to Project Zero.

Rosalinda was linked with a mentor from Harderwyk Church who helped her design a strategic plan to get off welfare. Together they set up a budget that would help Rosalinda begin to climb out of debt. The church gave her an old car and helped her to find work at a greenhouse. Her family moved into a house the church owns, and Rosalinda's $200 monthly rent payment is deposited into a special savings account that she can eventually use to make a down payment on her own home.

The church's help didn't stop with housing, transportation, and a job. Church volunteers also extracted Rosalinda from a complicated legal morass: She was holding three marriage certificates simultaneously. After the deportation of her first husband, she had agreed to marry another immigrant so he could get into the country. Later, members of her extended family stole her driver's license and birth certificate and forged her signature to marry her to someone else they wanted to get into the United States. Rosalinda's case was also challenging because she quit her greenhouse job after only one month, citing conflicts with the manager. She had to settle for a lower-paying job at Burger King, but recently the church helped her land a factory job paying $9 an hour.

Amy L. Sherman is director of urban ministries at Trinity Presbyterian Church in Charlottesville, Virginia, and author of Restorers of Hope: Reaching the Poor in Your Community with Church-based Ministries That Work. *Some names have been changed in this article.*

"People like Rosalinda come from very, very dysfunctional families. They can't count on them for anything, and the relationships are so messed up," says Ginny Weerstra, one of the volunteers working with Rosalinda. Given her family background, Rosalinda admits that at first it was difficult for her to trust her church mentors. In the last few months, however, Rosalinda has been meeting in a prayer and Bible study group with Weerstra and three other Project Zero participants the church is assisting. "Little by little," Weerstra says, "their defenses have dropped and they've started opening up about their lives with each other. I think it's helped them to realize that there is someone bigger than themselves—God—who's in charge here. I don't think they feel so alone in their battle."

The prayer group has provided not only emotional support, but also a place for moral challenge and accountability. "Rosalinda definitely has an attitude," Weerstra reports, "and she's almost lost a job because of that attitude. So we've been trying to work with her on that, telling her that it's not helping her. I think it's starting to get through, because Rosalinda is really praying about that at the Bible study."

The multi-faceted support that churches such as Harderwyk offer welfare recipients has won them credibility with one local source of private-sector jobs: the Manpower temporary agency. Manpower has designated one staff member to work exclusively with churches in identifying possible employees. "If it weren't for the church support system, Manpower would not be willing to take a risk with some of these families," says Harderwyk's Jay Bangronigan, who oversees the congregation's mentoring program.

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LILIA HERNANDEZ, another Project Zero participant, credits the Bible-based teaching she received at a church-sponsored homeless shelter, and the personal support she's obtained from her church mentor, for turning her life around. Hernandez, a 28-year-old Puerto Rican, became homeless in 1996 when the man she had been living with severed the relationship and threw her out. Pregnant and with her three young children in tow, Hernandez turned to a girlfriend who agreed to put her up. A few months later they were evicted for nonpayment of rent, and Hernandez ended up at the City Mission. While there, she attended mandatory Bible-based classes on patience, perseverance, and self-esteem, and began to realize she could take responsibility for her life. This, she explains, was a "turning point." Now, she says, "There's not one day that passes by, when things get hard on me or I get tired, that I don't think about what I learned there."

After her stay in the City Mission, Hernandez was linked with Calvary Christian Reformed Church and her Project Zero mentor, Jan Tuls. "Jan is a big part of my life. We see each other mostly every day," Hernandez says. "It's like a mother-and-daughter friendship. She's given me strength. There's no way I'm going back to my old life."

For the past three months, Hernandez has been working the 3-to-11 shift on an assembly line at the Donnelly Corporation, which manufactures car mirrors. She nets $270 each week. Project Zero pays for her child care, and Tuls shuttles her around whenever Hernandez's clunker acts up. "Working full-time is still fairly new for Maria," Tuls says, "so I worry that she might be overwhelmed. She wants to keep working, but she's under a mountain of pressure. It's one of those things where you just think, 'Keep at it, kiddo.'"

Not all Project Zero participants have kept at it. Phyllis Bruggers and three other members of Third Reformed Church in Holland, Michigan, tried for nine months to help Laura, a twenty something divorcee with three children who was living with a derelict boyfriend in a mini-bus. When Laura became pregnant with her fourth child, the welfare office moved her family into government-subsidized housing and Project Zero linked her with Third Reformed. The church volunteers helped her move, did 30 loads of laundry, and encouraged Laura to keep the apartment clean. "Every time we helped her," Bruggers reports, "she was happy about it. But when we tried to get her to take responsibility, she resented it." Laura continually stood up the budget counselor, refused to take a harder line with the boyfriend who said 9-to-5 work "was for fools," gave up on getting her GED, balked at working, and finally dismissed the volunteers. "When she did that, we felt like we'd been a miserable failure," Bruggers says, starting to cry. A staff member from Good Samaritan comforted the church volunteers by reminding them that they couldn't aid someone who refused to help herself. Laura has since been evicted from her apartment and her children have been put in foster care because a state nurse found them living in filth.

Jay Bangronigan reports that one of the six Project Zero clients that Harderwyk is working with has also come to a standstill. "Donna suffers from depression and clinical mental health issues," Bangronigan says. "We've provided budget counseling, mentoring, access to decent jobs, but she continues to hang on to a dead-end job at Burger King. We've reached a stalemate with her," he says.

Ginny Weerstra is a church volunteer with Michigan's Project Zero.

Sometimes churches fail to make significant progress with difficult clients because they are inexperienced in providing benevolence coupled with tough love. The Reverend David Mitchell's Southern Baptist congregation in Jackson, Mississippi, for example, has been working with a Faith & Families participant for over a year. He complains that the Faith & Families staff did not adequately train his congregation. "Our benevolence committee people were used to working with short-term problems, but this mentoring is ongoing," says Mitchell. The church bought a used car for its 24-year-old "adoptee" Tamika, and helped Tamika secure a job at an office supply company where a church member was office manager. Church volunteers were elated, because Tamika had wanted a daytime job so she could spend evenings with her three children. But their joy was short-lived. "She worked there three months and then one day she called me and said she was leaving. She didn't give any notice," Mitchell recalls. "I'm not sure exactly why she left. I think she had more structure than she wanted. It tied her down. She had to be there 8-to-5 and go to lunch when they said." He adds, "She couldn't adapt to that environment from what she had been used to—which was doing whatever she wanted to do all day long, every day." The church will not accept another Faith & Families participant until Mitchell can figure out a better system for keeping clients accountable.

Mitchell's struggles point to the importance of adequate training for church mentor teams. In Michigan's Project Zero and Maryland's Community-directed Assistance Program

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Getting people from welfare to work can be a Herculean task. So far, it is church people, more than any others, who are taking up the challenge.

(C-DAP), where training has been more thorough and there are systems in place to support the mentors (C-DAP, for example, hosts regular gatherings where mentors from various churches meet to encourage one another and swap lessons learned), churches have experienced greater success in moving clients from welfare to work. In Mississippi, despite impressive success stories, the record is more mixed. Several church leaders I interviewed said they could have used more in-depth training. Faith & Families field coordinator Ronald Moore acknowledges the need and is currently developing a church training video.

The nature of the training varies, depending on whether it is church- or government-sponsored. In Ottawa County, Good Samaritan Ministries trains church mentors and emphasizes the importance of meeting the needs of both body and soul. In the Texas Pathfinders initiative, *government* personnel do most of the training; so the spiritual element is absent.

When government officials are in charge there also may be less urgency behind the drive to end welfare dependency. Lucy Todd, the state-employed Pathfinders director, states that "the volunteers come into our training not knowing very much about how complex it's going to be for people to get off of welfare. When they finish our training, they have a whole new view of the situation." She relates with unsettling enthusiasm an anecdote that suggests government trainers could prove counterproductive to the goal of getting people off the dole: "When the volunteers work for the family, they really become advocates.... I was in San Angelo last week and members of a mentor team were literally screaming at the welfare worker about the eligibility benefits. They were incensed at the system that has been put in place by welfare reform. And these are people who a year ago were lobbying for welfare reform!"

GOVERNMENT-PROVIDED TRAINING that gives volunteers a working knowledge of welfare rules may be useful. But it is also possible that ignorance is the mother of invention: Church volunteers who don't know what benefits their "adoptee" may be eligible for may take greater responsibility for devising solutions themselves. In any event, it's doubtful that educating a welfare recipient to navigate the system for all it's worth will lead to self-sufficiency. The message of welfare reform, after all, is that individuals must take primary responsibility for their own sustenance rather than looking to Uncle Sam.

Not all churchgoers are thrilled with this idea. The national leadership of many mainline Protestant denominations fought welfare reform tooth and nail, and they continue to lobby President Clinton to "fix" the legislation. The views of the Reverend Glenn Allison, president of the Ecumenical Council of San Diego, typify those of many liberal Protestants. While claiming he is "not against welfare reform," and that he supports mentoring of recipients by congregations, Allison criticizes many aspects of the reform law and argues that religious people must not respond only with "good works" but with advocacy for "social and economic justice." This phrase refers to his rather vague notions of a better society in which "everyone is honored and has access to whatever it is that they can do"; where everyone's gifts are "upheld" whether or not they are channeled through normal employment; and where single mothers are not forced out of their homes into jobs.

In a similar vein, the National Council of Churches (NCC) decries the end of entitlements and rarely misses an opportunity to assert that government, not the church, is principally responsible for assisting the poor. NCC president-elect Craig Anderson argues that the church "cannot carry the weight of what's being asked for." The NCC's Washington office declared last May: "Voluntarism alone...cannot replace the responsibility of government to provide for the common good."

By contrast, the national institutions of conservative evangelical churches—such as the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), the Christian Coalition, and the Family Research Council—are now, because of their support of welfare reform, more vigorously calling their constituencies to greater personal involvement in helping the poor. Literature about the Samaritan Project, the Christian Coalition's recently launched effort to provide financial support to faith-based community ministries and inner-city churches and to promote racial reconciliation, states: "Many evangelical Christians and Roman Catholics believe that welfare and federal entitlement have hurt, rather than helped poor and minority communities. Yet, we also acknowledge the biblical mandate to help those in need. As a social movement, we cannot be defined only by what we protest. We must take action to demonstrate what we support."

The National Association of Evangelicals, in a resolution entitled "Heeding the Call of the Poor: Let the Church Be the Church," acknowledged both the failures of government welfare and the responsibility of the Christian community "to model the sacrificial love of Christ by increasing its financial giving and personal involvement with the poor." The resolution called on every church congregation in America to help at least one struggling family. In September, NAE hosted a welfare reform "summit" in which representatives of 14 denominations brainstormed on how their churches could respond to welfare reform. "It was just a first step," says organizer Don Hammond, "but it was a good one. I hope in five years we'll be at the point where people will look at the evangelical movement and say that we are dealing with a broad spectrum of social issues"—not just abortion and pornography, but poverty and racial reconciliation as well.

Most churches haven't yet attained this ideal. As the Family Research Council's Deanna Carlson puts it, "I wish I could say my phone was ringing off the hook with churches calling for practical advice on how to reach out, but it's not. But I'm defi-

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nitely getting more of those calls since the passage of welfare reform, and the church leaders are asking great questions."

One of those questions is whether churches should collaborate with their local governments when responding to the needs of welfare recipients. Project Zero, C-DAP, Faith & Families, and Texas Pathfinders all involve church-state partnerships. Though the "Charitable Choice" provisions of the welfare law—which seek to protect religious groups that accept government money for their outreach efforts from becoming secularized in the process—have helped some evangelicals feel more comfortable about church-state cooperation, others remain leery.

One Church, One Family, a new Christian non-profit group in Delaware that matches church volunteers with welfare recipients, has decided to work exclusively with private agencies. "The main component of our program is spiritual, and we don't want to ever have to water that down," says the organization's executive director, Dawn Carlson. "Unless you meet the spiritual side of a man, he can't truly be changed permanently. And because of our fear that once you develop a partnership with government there might be some regulations put on that, we decided to go with a different approach."

Church-state issues aren't the only ones affecting the prospects for a more large-scale collaboration between governmental social service agencies and the faith community. More mundane matters, such as staffing, also play a role. In settings where the government has designated just one individual to work with the church community, results have been predictably modest. In the first year of Mississippi's Faith & Families, when Moore was the lone employee, only 13 families were brought into face-to-face relationships with church mentors. Once the Faith & Families office staff expanded to five, the initiative exploded. Maryland's C-DAP has shown slow but steady growth, but after three years, fewer than 30 churches have been involved. In San Diego, it took hard-working Social Services staffer Bobbi Neff almost a year and a half to mobilize 18 churches.

But where government and churches are linked by the right intermediate organization, the scope and scale of church involvement are considerably larger. In Fairfax County, Virginia, a nonprofit called Community Ministries has succeeded in mobilizing 75 congregations to work with homeless families in partnership with a local government's housing initiative. And the Good Samaritan Center in Ottawa County managed to recruit nearly 60 churches for Project Zero in 15 months. In both instances, the intermediary organization enjoyed the confidence of the local religious community and knew how to contact church leaders. The intermediaries could tell church leaders that they had evaluated the project and thought it worthy of support. In the absence of such organizations, governmental officials—who may be totally unfamiliar with the local faith community—are left to their own devices.

Churches also appear to be more readily mobilized when they are presented with a clearly defined request for assistance. As Ralph Williamson, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg County Department of Social Services' point man for mobilizing congregations, reports, "What we heard from the churches was, 'We need specifics. What program model are you talking about? When would we start? How do we do it?'" Williamson did not want to present a pre-packaged program to the churches; he wanted to learn what they were interested in doing. The result, though, has been a lot more talk than action. By contrast, in Michigan the Good Samaritan Center hashed out the details of the welfare-to-work mentoring program with local welfare officials and then had something concrete to show the churches.

IN LIGHT OF THESE encouraging but not dramatic developments, most pro-welfare-reform church leaders on the front lines say there is more to be done to tap the capacity of churches. Yet Bill Raymond, executive director of Good Samaritan, is frustrated by the idea that the churches can "replace" the government. He argues, "People don't realize what's all involved in welfare. The church can't take on SSI or Medicaid. The church isn't prepared financially or conceptually to do that and it shouldn't get into that bureaucratic, administrative end." Instead, Raymond says, the church should do what it can do best—and what the government can't do at all: "engage in transformational relationships." Other pro-reform church leaders concur. Bangronigan, who has led Harderwyk's impressive work with 36 needy families, thinks the average church is willing to take on one or two cases at a time. Moreover, some suburban churches are not responding to the needs presented by welfare reform, while other financially strapped inner-city churches feel unable to respond.

If the churches' response has been modest in its scale, it has nevertheless been impressive in its depth. Ed Kirk, a retired Catholic layman in Maryland, rose at 7 o'clock every morning for four months to give Jane, the C-DAP participant his church had adopted, a ride to work. Jan Tuls has made herself available to Lilia Hernandez on a daily basis for 19 months. Jay Bangronigan asks mentors at Harderwyk Church to make a commitment to developing a friendship with a welfare recipient for as long as the recipient wants—whether that's six months or 60 years. Stronger Hope Baptist Church, a congregation of 300 moderate-income African-American families, has helped 19 welfare recipients find jobs and a new way of life since Faith & Families began in late 1994. Texas Pathfinders director Lucy Todd, whose previous experience was with paid government social workers, admits "it blows her mind" when she hears how church members become daily chauffeurs for months at a time for single moms and their kids.

Getting people from welfare to work can be a herculean task. So far, it is churches, more than any other institution, that are taking up the challenge. C-DAP Director Remy Agee reports that when she sought community support for the mentoring initiative, churches were the only ones willing to make a long-term commitment; other social services groups shied away, preferring one-time or more limited endeavors. It may be that there are still too few churches involved. But the fact remains, it is churches that are showing the way.

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Why Welfare Reform Can't Succeed Without the Help of Religious People

BY ROBERT L. WOODSON, SR.

OUR WELFARE PROBLEM is part of a larger crisis in America. Every year, more American blacks are killed in urban violence by other blacks than the total number of blacks who died in service throughout nine years of the Vietnam War. Today, little children can stand at the scene of a homicide calmly eating ice cream cones.

"The crisis now facing black America is more devastating than the combined impact of slavery, racial discrimination, and drugs. For now, the enemy is within," says Pastor Leonidas Young, a liberal Democrat who was formerly mayor of Richmond, Virginia. To continue to focus on racism as the principal enemy of the black community is to travel down a lethal path of self-deception. Our communities are dying from self-inflicted wounds.

And the moral dissolution that is devastating our low-income minority neighborhoods has also begun gnawing away at white, upper-income society. Carroll O'Connor, Gloria Vanderbilt, and other affluent celebrities have lost children to substance abuse or suicide. George McGovern's daughter died a lonely alcoholic, frozen in the winter snow. Margaux Hemingway was found dead after a long struggle with alcohol and bulimia.

If race and poverty cause social breakdown, then why do we have cases like the Menendez brothers, who gunned down their affluent parents in cold blood? If lack of educational opportunities is the problem, why didn't authorities assume that a Harvard degree would have prevented the accused Unabomber from plotting murders? Why didn't prestige and privilege prevent a Nobel laureate from sexually abusing the children he worked with? Why are there so many wealthy people in drug rehab?

Many Americans live in lavish homes that echo with emptiness, and many wealthy children experience the same moral confusion as poor kids. Across society, a spiritual and moral free fall has created fear and unhappiness, and destruction. A majority of Americans say that the nation's moral problems concern them more than its economic challenges.

The good news is that solutions to our welfare problem, and the larger moral crisis to which it is linked, do exist. But the ultimate answers lie beyond traditional responses like job training, education, subsidized housing, food assistance, or racial reconciliation. To locate solutions to our most dangerous social diseases we must look in some new places.

For there are embers of health and restoration even among the ruins of today's inner-city neighborhoods. To make use of the hope they offer, we must open ourselves to new kinds of authority and expertise. Some of today's most promising community healers have come out of our prisons, out of drug addiction, out of dysfunctional families and crime-ridden neighborhoods. Many have themselves fallen into trouble—but then recovered through their faith in God.

MANY OF THESE moral healers are helping—with meager resources—persons conventional service-providers have given up on. Yet these healers' effectiveness eclipses that of conventional professional remedies. For example, a faith-based substance abuse program es-

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tablished in San Antonio, Texas, by a recovered drug addict named Freddie Garcia has freed 13,000 drug abusers and alcoholics from their addictions. It operates at a cost of only $80 per person, per day, yet has a 70 percent success rate, in contrast to conventional therapeutic programs for substance abusers that charge up to $600 a day per client yet have far lower success rates.

Why haven't we heard more about these social healers? Why haven't we tapped their approaches to address not only the needs of the underclass but also the problems of apathy, despair, and isolation that are wrenching families of every race, ethnicity, and income bracket?

The main reason, simply put, is elitism. The moral and religious approaches emphasized by healers like Pastor Garcia are looked down upon by many in our cultural establishment, who prefer to view the poor as hapless victims waiting to be rescued by experts and monthly checks. After all, the poor are now worth $340 billion in annual allotments made by governments in their name.

Today's civil rights establishment, the academic and governmental poverty industries, and their political affiliates will not easily relinquish their "ownership" of the problems of race and poverty. That's why they have fiercely opposed welfare reform, particularly any solutions that compete with their clinical, money-based approach.

But after the failure of last generation's War on Poverty, some private groups and individuals began exploring less conventional methods of aiding the underclass. In the process they discovered remedies that could potentially salvage our nation. Religious-based healers have successfully addressed problems that everyone agrees are at the core of our meltdown—the moral degeneracy that gets expressed in violence, drug addiction, sexual license, and family disloyalty.

I DIDN'T DISCOVER the power of faith-based remedies through any deep religious convictions of my own. I was simply the founder of a policy institute looking for ways to combat poverty. For two years, I hosted town meetings around the country and invited local leaders to show me strategies of personal and community revitalization that have been effective. I still don't entirely understand how faith-based organizations reach into the heart of the most severely damaged individuals and transform them. But overwhelming evidence shows they can do just that.

From Native American reservations in New Mexico, to black inner-city neighborhoods, to rural white mining towns, to Hispanic barrios, local residents and leaders have shown me that faith-based approaches work. I've talked to people who were in prison, who had infected their own sons with drugs, who were prostitutes, shattered people who experts said were beyond reach but whom I saw transformed. I met a white man who told me that for seven years while he was a police officer he was addicted to violence—against those he arrested, and against his own family. But he found his way to a grassroots ministry and his life was remade. He has now been violence-free for seven years.

Even within the most devastated social terrain, the embers of spiritual renewal are alive in the work of thousands of grassroots moral leaders. If these embers can be nourished by those who have wealth and influence, the flames of revitalization can sweep across the nation like a brushfire, bringing life and hope where there is now only cynicism, confusion, and despair.

Whenever I'm asked to describe my studies of grassroots social ministries and to explain their successes, I recall the New Testament story of the blind man. For years, he had no sight and was a beggar. Then one day he went to Jesus and was healed. The Bible says the scribes and pharisees were skeptical and tried to discredit Jesus and intimidate the man. They asked him, "Do you believe He is the Messiah?" The man replied, "Oh what a marvelous thing! That you great men of wisdom and knowledge would ask me, a poor and humble man, if He is the Messiah! All I can tell you is this: I was blind. And now I see...."

Robert L. Woodson, Sr. is president of the National Center for Neighborhood Enterprise. This essay is adapted from his forthcoming book, The Triumphs of Joseph.

Faith-based Healing Isn't Just for the Underclass

BY WILLIAM SCHAMBRA

HOW CAN WE MAKE grassroots groups that use religious teachings to solve social problems more acceptable to mainstream America?

I consider myself a mainstream kind of guy, and I not only find grassroots groups acceptable, I just can't hear enough from community leaders like Freddie Garcia, Juan Rivera, Rita Jackson, Carl Hardrick, and Leon Watkins. I've been reflecting recently on what it is that draws me again and again to listen to their message.

The last time I saw Pastors Garcia and Rivera was at Victory Fellowship, their substance abuse program in San Antonio. I went up to Juan and described, with some perplexity, the deep refreshment I always took away from his sessions. I told him I sensed it was related to the struggles I faced in my own life—struggles different from his only insofar as they occurred on the streets of more fashionable neighborhoods.

Pastor Rivera, the great minister to addicts, prisoners, and prostitutes, put his hand on my shoulder and said gently, "Hey, you're one of us."

Me? Addict? Prisoner? Prostitute? You bet. I may never have been addicted to heroin or crack, but hadn't I, in fact, been enslaved to another legal, so-called acceptable, chemical addiction? Hadn't I been hopelessly addicted at various points in my life to work, to scholarly credentials, to physical appearances, to professional success, political power, social status? I may have never been a prisoner behind physical bars, but I had been imprisoned within my exaggerated notions of who I am, my false suppositions about who others are. I may never have prostituted my body for money, but how many times have I prostituted my spirit—far worse—to achieve petty goals? I have been an addict, a prisoner, a prostitute.

What Pastor Rivera was offering me that day was an invitation into the community of the broken, of those who have acknowledged and repented for their sins; those who have found forgiveness and redemption in the healing presence of Christ.

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THAT IS WHAT I SENSE whenever I observe grassroots poverty ministries. That's what sends me back to my office renewed and healed every time.

Now it might seem as if Pastor Rivera's invitation would be irresistible to everybody, that mainstream America would come flocking. But that is hardly the case. Because the critical first step in accepting that invitation is admitting that we are indeed broken, that there are things wrong within each of us.

When things do go wrong, and we're finally confronted with irrefutable evidence of brokenness, Americans often rush to the altar of science. Just as we seem to believe there's no physical malady that can't be cured through medicine, so many of us think there's no psychological malady that can't be cured through social science. With the help of a government willing to buy us enough therapists and social workers, everything can be worked out.

Given our huge investment in this illusion, it's no wonder the message of faith-based healers isn't popular. For they don't talk about dysfunction and pathologies and being "at-risk"—all of which suggest material deficiencies that government or science can remedy. They talk about universal human weaknesses to be guarded against, by individual and society alike.

When Pastor Garcia tells thousands in a Houston auditorium, after a group of his former addicts have performed his play *The Junkie,* "Listen to me, folks. The miracle that took place in our lives didn't happen because we called upon the name of Socrates, Charles Darwin, Karl Marx, or Sigmund Freud. This transformation in our lives took place when we called upon the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ," you can imagine what that does to those of us who have spent our lives worshipfully studying Socrates, Darwin, Marx, and Freud. Yet the fact remains: Garcia speaks the truth.

FRESH SIGNS GIVE ME HOPE that faith-based poverty activists may be listened to more attentively. Americans are becoming aware that something really is fundamentally wrong with our nation today—something that forces its way through the walls of denial, something well beyond the curative powers of public policy or science. You hear more and more discussion about the moral and spiritual exhaustion of the culture, about a national sickness of the soul. This sickness doesn't dwell solely in the inner city, although it is more visible there because poor people don't have the material resources to hide the effects of disastrous spiritual diseases that rich people have.

Many Americans sense that the way to fight back against spiritual sickness is to revitalize the family, churches, neighborhood organizations, and voluntary associations—the institutions that once gave form and substance to our deepest moral convictions. In Pastor Rivera's words, Americans are yearning for communion among repentant children of God.

Some of the Americans who would like to experience that sort of community don't think it's possible anymore. They're full of despair and resignation. They look at the dry, scattered bones of our communities and say, "No one can breathe life back into these lifeless bones." Tell that to Freddie Garcia, Leon Watkins, Carl Hardrick. Tell that to the grassroots folks I've met in Milwaukee—Deacon Bill Locke, Lessie Handy, Cordelia Taylor.

Every day, these men and women take the broken bodies of addicts, prisoners, and prostitutes and breathe the life of Christ back into them. They take boarded-up homes and build joyful temples of worship. They take abandoned stores and build diners. They take run-down corner taverns and build senior citizen facilities and daycare centers. Don't tell these folks that we can't revive our civic institutions, because they have experienced decay and death, and now know how to generate personal and civic resurrection under the least hospitable circumstances imaginable.

I've spoken with businessmen and professionals who have been wonderfully successful at what they do and made a lot of money. Suddenly, they arrive at middle age and realize something fundamental is missing. These people come to feel that they're called to offer their wealth and skills in the service of some higher purpose. Yet they know that getting involved with big, top-down private charities will not suffice, because those kinds of organizations don't fight poverty any more effectively than they create wealth. So they're searching for something else.

I have also spoken with young people who tell me they want to devote themselves to a cause, to an undertaking that will give their lives real purpose. All the great secular movements that in previous decades might have spoken to these youthful yearnings have dried up and collapsed. They proved to be gods that failed. So these young people are searching for something else.

And I have spoken with quietly faithful Christians who, at some point or another, end up living the experience of Jacob. Like Jacob, they find themselves alone in their tent one night, in the dark night of the soul, wrestling with God. For some, it is an addiction or alcohol dependency. For others, the tragic death of a loved one, or losing a job, or a divorce. With the grace of God, they outlast those struggles, sometimes even feeling blessed like Jacob. But like Jacob who was smitten on the thigh, they will forever walk with a limp. No longer are they interested in personal façades. They are searching for other people who, like themselves, have reached a new appreciation of life's meaning, and who now walk with a limp.

Let all of these searchers after servanthood bring their wealth, their professional skills, their dedication, their energy, their humble and open hearts, and offer them as gifts to our faith-based attack on poverty. This can begin today. None of it depends on passing laws, or winning elections, or raising or lowering taxes, or persuading some stubborn government bureaucrat to cooperate. This is civil society, using its own spiritual and moral resources to heal itself.

If we take up these efforts, not only will our low-income communities revive, but more and more mainstream Americans will experience the kind of permanent transformation that only comes from within. For myself, I can report that I still draw sustenance from that moment when Pastor Rivera put his hand on my shoulder and said simply, "Hey, you're one of us."

This is adapted from a speech delivered by William Schambra, a director at the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation of Milwaukee and a former scholar at the American Enterprise Institute.

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What Government Must Do

Make Welfare Unappealing or Reform Will Fail

BY CHARLES MURRAY

YEARS AGO I WORKED for a research company that evaluated social programs for the federal government. One time I was heading a team assessing a program for troubled inner-city teenagers. As the evaluation approached its end, no quantitative measure showed the program had accomplished anything. I gave the draft of the report to the program's staff.

They were unhappy and angry. Maybe what they'd accomplished didn't show up in the numbers, they said, but dammit, they dealt in human lives, not numbers, and they knew they'd had an impact. I can't change the numbers, I replied, but we'll go through your files, pull out the ones that represent your biggest successes, and I'll write them up as case histories of what the program can accomplish at its best.

So we went through the files together. And we couldn't find any successes. The staff had been thinking about Sally, let's call her, who in the first year of the program had come back to school, pulled her grades up, and stayed away from drugs. But when we looked up what had happened to Sally since she'd left the program, it turned out she had dropped out of school and was back on drugs. It wasn't that our numbers had failed to capture important outcomes, but that the staff hadn't checked up on their success stories for a while, and they had regressed to where they started. In the end, I had to make what I could from a few examples of fragmentary progress.

This history is a cautionary tale for thinking about what we can expect from welfare devolution. In the articles that accompany this one, Aaron Steelman and Amy Sherman tell an entirely believable account of how hard it is even for the most well-meaning and dedicated people to change people's lives, and we must ask even of this scattered good news how many of the success stories will still be successes a year from now. It is time to return to a few hard realities that have been slipping from sight as we become accustomed to news about plunging welfare rolls.

The first reality is that welfare rolls have not gone down because of actual changes in law or the operation of welfare bureaucracies. As recent studies reveal, the rolls have been dropping at about the same rate before and after the provisions of any given welfare reform have gone into effect. What changed, if not the laws? Don't rely on the growing economy for explanations. Look at the welfare rolls in the economic expansions of the 1960s and 1980s: In the Reagan years, welfare rolls remained steady; during the Johnson boom years, when unemployment stood at less than 4 percent, the welfare rolls soared. The growing economy of the 1990s has increased the ability of welfare recipients to get jobs if they want them, but the trigger for the change in wanting jobs must be sought somewhere besides growth in GNP.

In seeking that trigger, we know this much for sure: For a few years, the politicians, including the President, talked very tough indeed. Two years and out. No more entitlement to welfare. Get a job or you're going to find yourself on the streets. Legislation began to pass in individual states, then in Washington. The media gave headline coverage to the direst predictions—the coming of Calcutta on the Hudson, a million children thrown into poverty, etc. The word spread to the street. The least attentive welfare recipient could not avoid being bombarded with messages that her world was about to come crashing down.

My interpretation of the trends in welfare rolls is that the rhetoric worked. The welfare population includes a fairly large number of women who could work if they wanted to badly enough, and all the hoopla moved some proportion of those women to act. This is not a trivial accomplishment. But neither is it necessarily going to continue. Once we look beyond that top layer of competent and readily motivated women, we find another hard reality: The interventions of outsiders—whether they be government social workers or church volunteers or socially conscious employers—require a receptive client. Receptive means first that she is not already deeply habituated to the life she lives. Receptive also means the client knows she is in dire trouble unless she gets her life in order. Absent either of those conditions, social interventions end up with evaluations concluding that the intervention had no statistical effect.

I write these pessimistic cautions as someone who believes that only the private realm of employers, philanthropy, churches, and neighbors can

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succeed in reducing the size of the underclass. In many ways, Sherman and Steelman are describing a resurrection of the model I admire most: the extensive and energetic social philanthropy developed in late-nineteenth-century England by the Victorians, a private system that enjoyed enormous success in propagating middle-class virtues down to the lowest ranks of the British working class. But while Sherman's and Steelman's heroes are heading in the right direction, they face a problem: Neither of the conditions for a receptive clientele applies broadly today.

Consider the first condition for receptivity, that the client not be deeply habituated to the life she lives. Of those left on the rolls, many are so alienated from regular schedules, work habits, and responsible behavior that no one knows how to make them into good workers. If helping agencies of any kind are to be effective, they must perform triage. In language the Victorians would have used, they must not shrink from distinguishing between the deserving and undeserving poor.

This doesn't mean the undeserving must be abandoned. The Victorians accepted that they could feed and clothe them. But the Victorians focused their most energetic efforts on the deserving. America's helping agencies, public and private, have yet to accept that (1) from an ethical standpoint we should first help those who are trying to help themselves, and (2) from a practical standpoint they are just about the only ones we can help. A church shouldn't be putting its limited resources into helping young women who have to be pushed and cajoled to look for a job. It should be helping young women who have lined up a job but can't find a ride to work. A company shouldn't reserve job slots for employees who must be treated with kid gloves lest they get in a fight with their supervisors; it should be on the lookout for those whose job records may be bad but are saying, "Just give me a chance, and you can fire me the first time I'm five minutes late." Help those who are receptive to help, *let it be openly seen that those who are receptive to help receive preferential treatment*, and you will have begun the process whereby more and more people become receptive.

The second condition of receptivity, urgent motivation to change, is also weak. Even if it is true that today's private helpers need a dose of good old-fashioned judgmentalism, most of the blame for the difficulties they face falls on the government. The Victorians had the crucial advantage of working alongside a government that believed in the rule of "less eligibility," meaning that public assistance had to provide a standard of living less desirable (less eligible) than that enjoyed by the lowest-paid worker. The Victorians worked in an environment in which to have a baby without help from the baby's father or one's own parents was to be forced to rely on the kindness of strangers. Thus did the Victorians find a clientele motivated by the prospect of hovering disaster, and thus did they achieve great things.

In contrast, today's employers and church committees are finding that whatever momentary scare they had working for them is rapidly dissipating. The Clinton White House, with the collaboration of a Republican Congress, is busily gutting the tough aspects of the original welfare reform bill. Social workers, many of whom were hostile toward the welfare reform bill in the first place, are looking for excuses to relax the pressure to get

jobs. Ways are being found, as they are always found with complex welfare systems, to slip through loopholes. These changes are known to the clientele—the street-level awareness of changes in atmosphere at the welfare office is as keen as Wall Street's sensitivity to changes in atmosphere at the Federal Reserve.

Women are already seeing through the propaganda. The welfare system still provides a better living than a low-wage job, it is still a more reliable source of money than the boyfriend, and if you know the ins and outs you can stay on it indefinitely. For the last few years, those who were trying to help move welfare women to work were dealing with women who were genuinely worried about what the future held. That is decreasingly true. Before the private helpers can do good, the government has to get the ground rules right. The government moved in that direction in 1996 but then lost its nerve.

My gloomy prediction? Faced with a difficult job at best, and trying to deal with an increasingly unreceptive clientele, churches and employers and local groups will have fewer and fewer successes to show for their efforts. The welfare rolls will start to move up again, and the pundits will say it proves that the private sector can't do the job after all. This can be avoided. But it will require a moral resolve about why welfare dependency is bad, why illegitimacy is bad, and why they must be reduced, that the President never had and that Congress has lost.

Charles Murray is the Bradley Fellow at the American Enterprise Institute.

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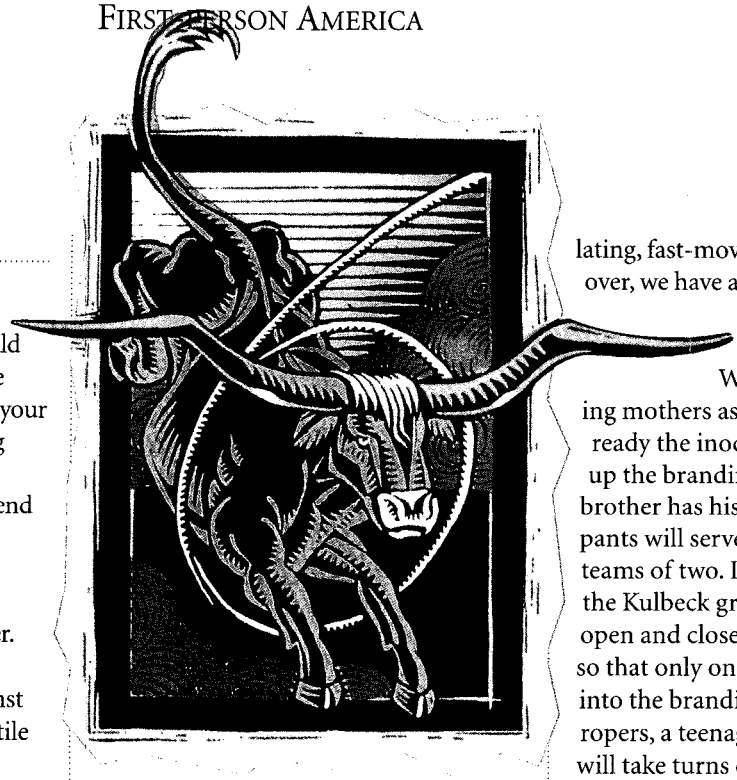
In Real Life

FIRST-PERSON AMERICA



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ROUNDUP

By Hendrik Mills

HARLEM, MONTANA—What would you call a day of hard toil on someone else's farm for no pay? You're getting your pants covered with wet manure, being kicked by hoofed animals, and when you're suddenly thrown on your rear end in the mud your "co-workers" laugh insensitively and make crude jokes at your expense. And all you receive in return is a meal after the danger is over.

Are you being exploited? Perhaps you should pursue a legal claim against the person who has created this "hostile work environment."

Or you could stop whining and enjoy being one of the lucky few who get to be part of that great Western tradition—cattle branding!

Why do ranchers brand their cattle? For the same reason your car has a serial number. The day begins with a rag-tag group of mounted cowboys, volunteers on foot (like me), and the owner of the spread trying to surround the cows and calves that are spread out over a large pasture. There may be several hours' delay, as we had at the Kulbecks' ranch this May when a few dozen cows decided to swim across the Milk River rather than be herded into the waiting corrals.

Eventually the bovines are bunched up under some cottonwoods and we shoo each animal, one at a time, through a metal gate into the system of pens. Once in the pens, this mooing, alarmed, and over-crowded bunch has to be separated. Some have horns, all have hard hooves and more heft than I do, and they're milling around chaotically.

The calves were born in late winter or early spring, and they're the ones we're going to brand. They must be temporarily separated from their mothers so we can wrestle them down and brand them without being trampled by the mothers. The superiority of brain over brawn is clearly demonstrated when about 1,200 pounds' worth of men and boys wades in and succeeds in separating about 20,000 pounds of frightened calves from about 90,000 pounds of upset mothers.

This is achieved by having two smaller corrals connected to the main holding pen. Three or four men will single out a cow, surround it, and simultaneously wave arms and shout, leaving a gap for the "cowed" cow to rush through. This gap leads, of course, to the corral we want it to enter, and the gate is opened just in time and then slammed shut after the animal rushes past. When this stimulating, fast-moving entertainment is over, we have a large, empty central corral, where the branding will take place.

MY INCENTIVE IS THE KNOWLEDGE THAT IF THE LEG GETS LOOSE, MY FACE WILL BE THE NEAREST SOLID OBJECT FOR IT TO CONTACT.

With the incessantly mooing mothers as spectators, we start to ready the inoculation needles and heat up the branding irons (each Kulbeck brother has his own). Certain participants will serve as calf-wrestlers in teams of two. I am one of them. One of the Kulbeck grandsons, age 11, will open and close the gate of the calf pen, so that only one calf at a time comes into the branding area. Two cowboy ropers, a teenager and an elderly man, will take turns dragging the calves out of the pen one by one. The elite positions of inoculator and brander are reserved for the Kulbeck brothers themselves.

A horse-mounted roper rides into the calf pen, twirling a loop of rope. He deftly lays the loop down on the ground just in front of some calf's rear leg. If the calf steps in the lariat, he jerks it up, closing the rope around the calf's rear leg. Then he rides slowly out of the pen, pulling the calf out with him.

As soon as the calf clears the gate into the main corral, I and my partner run up to the calf, reach down, and each grab a flailing leg. We yank upward suddenly on the legs, and the calf finds itself lying in the dirt on its side with the wind knocked out of it. We have about three seconds to position ourselves to hold it down before it regains its bearings. The head-man kneels on the animal's neck and braces himself while holding the calf's upper front leg in a bent-double position. The tail-man is in a less delicate position. Sitting on his rump on the ground his job is to immobilize the calf's rear quarters by grasping them tightly with his legs and arms. I get this job.

The calf now has three of its four legs in an awkward and constrained position

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and so will not get away—we hope. Tim calmly applies the red-hot branding iron to the exposed flank of the calf, about six inches from my leg and 18 inches from my face. The animal bawls and thrashes about desperately, but Tim methodically rocks the hot iron back and forth so as to make a readable and permanent brand. I'm not stout, and it's all I can do to keep hold of that kicking rear leg with both hands. My incentive is the knowledge that if the leg gets loose, my face will be the nearest solid object for it to contact. A thick cloud of smoke, generated by that branding iron as it ignites hair, skin and fat, billows around the hindquarters of the struggling calf, enveloping my head. A rancher 20 miles north told us he can't brand his bison calves because he tried it once and they caught on fire. I believe it.

Charlie injects some vaccine, and we're done. At the count of three, both calf-wrestlers let go and spring up and away from the calf. Since castration was done by the tight-rubber-band method at birth, the male brandees are spared the slicing that I saw at another branding. When castration does occur during branding, it may be followed later by a "Rocky Mountain Oyster Fry," often a big social occasion.

With three teams of wrestlers, we branded 85-90 calves that day. It didn't all go smoothly. A calf that wasn't tackled soon enough by the wrestlers ran wildly in a circle with the roper's horse as a pivot. Tim Kulbeck was standing unawares, branding iron in hand, in the path of the taut rope and was suddenly sent sprawling forward. Fortunately, he didn't brand himself.

When all the calves were branded and all the tools put away, the calves and mothers were reunited and it was mealtime. Julie Kulbeck had produced an impressive spread of food, with which we capped off a satisfying day. I made sure to compliment the plenteous food and drink. You see, I don't want to be left out when branding time comes around next year.

Hendrik Mills writes often for The American Enterprise *when he's not wrestling calves.*

GEN X IN OUR HOUSE

By Blake Hurst

WESTBORO, MISSOURI—My wife and I have our own window into Generation X. She's 5'11", smart, insecure, conservative, opinionated, and embarrassed by her father when he hollers at referees. (I can't help myself.) She has single handedly worn out our hot water heater and our washing machine. She can't decide on a college, or what to wear, but is so certain about all other aspects of her life that the mere hint of parental guidance raises hackles for days.

We receive at least two letters from colleges each day, but no school has caught Ann's fancy enough to end the agony of deciding where to matriculate. A full ride basketball scholarship would be nice, but unlikely, as she shoots free throws like Dennis Rodman. Ann wants to study political science, or journalism, or history, and we're not sure where to turn. But nobody will be happier when she makes up her mind than our mailman. This recruiting is new to me, as I don't remember hearing from any colleges while I was deciding where to go to school. Whether this is a change in the way colleges do business or a reflection on my academic record is not clear.

Ann has always hated family vacations. Our car trips to the West were agony for her, and as soon as basketball or volleyball gave her an excuse to duck out, she took it. We attend a meeting in Branson, Missouri, each summer, and she never misses a chance to poke fun at the schlock that passes for entertainment and architecture in the geriatric capital of the world. Come to think of it, she missed that trip this year too. But each winter I travel to Washington, D.C., and she never misses that trip, no matter what her school schedule. She has fallen in love with the beauty and history of our capital; thus her interest in history and politics. And since the farm group we visit with is usually simultaneously lobbying for the government to leave us alone and for the government to send us money, the rather gritty contradictions of politics will not come as a surprise to Ann.

She received her first notice of poor performance in twelve years of schooling this year from the teacher in her (required) Parenting class. Her teacher found her unenthusiastic about role playing, more willing than perhaps was wise to point out the idiocy of carrying around an electronic baby, and altogether too obstreperous. This caused something of a *real* "parenting" crisis in our household, as Ann's analysis of the whole situation was too close to mine to make me totally comfortable in my necessary role as the heavy. My efforts to chastise totally broke down when she pointed out that if I had taken a parenting class, "I wouldn't have a daughter like her."

I retreated and regrouped, and later broached the subject of parenting class again. Ann pointed out that the class was a waste of time, as teaching morals without reference to religion was bound to fail. This view is quite controversial elsewhere, but is settled opinion in our house, and I know when I'm whipped. I ended this discussion by pointing out the value of hypocrisy when grade point averages and college scholarships are at stake.

It has been bittersweet to watch Ann and her classmates travel through this, their last year in our small school and our small town. Her friends are all talented, hard working, and beautiful. Her volleyball team was defeated in the district final but had the distinction of placing the top six girls in class rank on the court at the same time. Each of the girls has a part-time job, receives straight A's, and is off to a wonderful start in life, if not off to the state playoffs. None will likely settle here, as our community is much better at preparing kids for life than preparing a place for them to spend their life. But we've done our part to make Generation X a success. Ann and her classmates know about work, and studying hard, and if they are the least bit representative of their generation, then I'm optimistic. And, although their volleyball team didn't make it, there's still basketball season to go.

Blake Hurst grows corn, beans, and bedding plants in the northwestern corner of his state.

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the Sports Pork Economist

Put Pro Sports Blackmailers Out of Business

By Grant Gulibon

Taxpayer subsidies for new sports stadiums have been responsible for some of the biggest expansions of government during the 1990s. Cities have used public money to engage in unseemly bidding wars, with pro teams playing government against government in quest of an ever-more-lucrative stadium deal. As the bidding has risen, even teams with stadiums as young as 15 to 20 years old (like the domes used by the Minnesota Twins and the Seattle Seahawks) are demanding new playpens costing upwards of $400 million.

When the desperate desire of city leaders to declare that they are "major league" meets a sports owner's lust for more money, the result is often a state-of-the-art facility with high-priced seats, shops, restaurants, and advertising opportunities—all constructed at taxpayer expense. By decade's end, at least 45 new sports stadiums and arenas will have been built, with four-fifths of the multi-billion dollar tab picked up by taxpayers (according to the Reason Foundation).

Yet there is simply no reason for governments to construct expensive buildings for private, profit-seeking businesses like pro sports teams. The demands for new stadiums now mushrooming around the country are attempts by team owners to escape jams of their own making. Because of the multi-million-dollar salaries they have agreed to, and the multi-million-dollar team purchase prices some of them are paying, owners are searching for new sources of revenue. To make their finances work, teams are playing a new game called "stadium extortion." Where the ploy has succeeded, new parks built by taxpayers have become cash machines channeling money to teams via luxury suite leases, club seats, food service revenues, parking fees, and other amenities.

(AP Photo/George Widman)

The CoreStates Center is the new privately-financed $210 million home of Philadelphia's 76ers and Flyers.

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, is just one of many cities now experiencing such a shakedown. An organization called the Regional Renaissance Partnership recently mounted an aggressive, well-funded lobbying campaign seeking a sales tax increase in 11 southwestern Pennsylvania counties, with most of the proceeds earmarked for new stadiums for the Pittsburgh Pirates baseball team and the NFL's Steelers. This followed the script laid out previously by pro sports blackmailers in Baltimore, Cleveland, and other cities, where veiled or open threats were made to move the franchise to a more "reasonable" community if a new, publicly funded facility wasn't built to order.

In a November referendum, however, Pittsburgh-area voters finally said no. What will happen to the local sports teams? Probably the same thing that happened a few years ago when taxpayers in Columbus, Ohio, turned down a sales tax increase for arena funding—sources of private financing stepped forward within weeks.

Defenders of public funding for stadiums claim that stadium construction has always been the job of government. This goes back to the days of the ancient Greeks and Romans. Yet until the middle of this century virtually all major league baseball and football stadiums in the U.S were private. In 1950, only one American League baseball field was publicly owned (Cleveland Municipal Stadium); no National League ballparks were publicly owned. The most revered parks in the country, including Boston's Fenway and New York's Yankee Stadium, were privately built.

Even during the 1960s—the zenith of government-funded stadium construc-

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tion before the 1990s—arenas were successfully built without public money. Take St. Louis's Busch Stadium, for instance. Privately financed and privately operated, it has turned a profit every year since it opened. The public's only contribution to its development was a $6 million bond issue for new streets and sewers.

More recently, the claim that new stadiums can only be built with government financing has been disproved by numerous cities that refused to knuckle under to extortionist threats. Since 1988, 15 new or totally renovated major league sports facilities have been financed privately. Governments have sensibly limited their involvement in these projects to the construction of legitimate infrastructure like sewer and water connections and transportation improvements.

Taxpayers Refuse to Be Stung by the Charlotte Hornets

It wasn't supposed to happen this way. In the heady world of professional sports, team owners are used to getting whatever they want. Football, basketball, and baseball franchises routinely receive subsidies and tax incentives to move to new cities (or stay in old ones) and play in subsidized parks. And Charlotte, North Carolina—a relatively new entrant with the NBA's Charlotte Hornets and NFL's Carolina Panthers—seemed to be the kind of city whose love affair with professional sports would never end. Both its teams enjoyed early successes and a "Cinderella" status that produced a national following. An emerging financial and commercial center in the South, Charlotte has been eager to boost its national profile and be seen as a "world-class" city.

So when Hornets owner George Shinn demanded a new, $162 million downtown coliseum with a substantial investment of taxpayer money, business leaders and elected officials fell right in line. What nobody counted on was that citizens of the Queen City might object. After months of intense criticism from a diverse coalition of opponents, spanning the ideological spectrum from the taxpayer group Citizens for Effective Government to the League of Women Voters, Shinn decided earlier this year to pull the plug on his proposal. Instead, he offered to buy the Hornets' current venue, the Charlotte Coliseum, which was built largely with taxpayer money less than a decade ago. Thus did the unhappy prospect of shelling out taxpayer subsidies to a professional sports team mutate in a few short months into the encouraging possibility of a debt-ridden government facility being privatized. And in an age when pro sports teams routinely threaten to move to other cities unless taxpayers fork over ever-increasing bribes, the fact that the Hornets would own their own arena would make the team less footloose in the future.

Part of the reason Charlotte stood up to the pressure for sports pork better than other cities may have been the experience it already had with private financing of sports facilities. When restaurant entrepreneur and former pro football player Jerry Richardson began his push for an NFL franchise for Charlotte, he decided to fund most of the cost of a new $234 million stadium with his own resources and the sale of "permanent seat licenses" to local business leaders and fans. State and local governments contributed only one-quarter of the total cost, all in land and infrastructure improvements.

This precedent came up again and again in the debate over Shinn's Hornets arena. One poll respondent put it this way: "If George [Shinn] wants to build another coliseum and use his own money, I'm more than willing to support that. But the taxpayer shouldn't help." Many Charlotteans were angered that the city's downtown business community, led by financial powerhouses NationsBank and First Union, cavalierly assumed that because they supported a new tax-funded arena, it would happen.

What lessons can other communities learn from Charlotte's experience with subsidized sports?

1. Seek allies in unlikely places. Public opposition to subsidizing big business (whether in sports or elsewhere) crosses partisan and ideological lines. Taxpayers who don't want to have their money stolen to bail out private firms can and should work with neighborhood associations, good-government groups, and small business organizations that also dislike government subsidies. Such broad-based coalitions have an excellent chance of winning, even when pitted against wealthy and well-connected opponents.

2. Don't be afraid to challenge conventional wisdom. Opponents of the new coliseum used economic studies to rebut the idea that professional sports produce a significantly positive economic impact. Coliseum-backers tried to brush these studies aside, but they were reported and discussed in the local news media and helped mobilize opposition.

3. Always identify alternative uses of taxpayer dollars. It's hard to beat something with nothing. Explain that a dollar spent on a sports team is a dollar not spent on schools, roads, law enforcement, and tax relief.

4. When all else fails, demand a referendum. Sports hucksters, for all their claims of fan support, fear the verdict of public opinion and will usually resist putting their plans to a vote. In the Charlotte case, the prospect of a referendum was the last straw for Shinn.

The sports extortion racket continues in most of the country, but taxpayers have more weapons at their disposal than they might think. And more are on the horizon. To put an end to bidding wars, Indiana University professor Mark Rosentraub has suggested that the National Governors Association and the U.S. Conference of Mayors agree to a binding compact that would prohibit use of public funds to subsidize sports teams. Recognizing that local sweetheart deals also cost U. S. taxpayers —via the federal tax exemption for state and local stadium bonds—Senator Pat Moynihan proposes to abolish this preference. Aimed at the right target in large enough numbers, taxpayer stings can be painful, as the Hornets discovered to their surprise.

*—**John Hood** is president of the John Locke Foundation, a North Carolina policy research organization.*

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Here are some ways to finance professional sports arenas privately:

• The "naming rights" to a facility can be sold to a corporation or individual. The Ottawa Senators received $25 million from the Corel software company for their privately financed $200 million Corel Centre. Many existing stadiums and arenas in need of renovation have also raised cash this way, including San Francisco's 3Com Park, Cincinnati's Cinergy Field, and New Jersey's Continental Airlines Arena.

• Teams can "pre-sell" luxury suites, premium seating, advertising rights, concessions, and "pouring rights." The home of the Miami Dolphins and Florida Marlins, Pro Player Park (previously Joe Robbie Stadium), was built with $115 million in private money, most of which came from the advance sale of executive-suite leases.

• Owners can recruit private investors—banks, corporations, or individuals—to provide construction financing in return for a share of the profits generated by a new facility. In Boston, the $160 million Fleet Center received no public funding save a commitment by the state and local governments to improve parking and mass transit service around the complex. In Philadelphia, the new CoreStates Center received only $13 million from the state and local governments for infrastructure; its $200 million cost was paid by private sources. The Rose Garden in Portland was privately financed to the tune of $262 million; the City of Portland's $34.5 million loan to the project will be repaid from parking and ticket fees.

• Teams have begun to sell "permanent seat licenses" (PSLs), which give the holder an exclusive right to buy those seats in perpetuity. The NFL's Carolina Panthers, after receiving $40-45 million in land from the city of Charlotte, privately financed a new $160 million stadium through private investment that included $100 million from the sale of PSLs, plus other private funds and revenue from naming the stadium for the Ericsson Corporation.

• Some owners have financed stadiums and arenas from their personal fortunes. The Washington Redskins' new Jack Kent Cooke Stadium was built with $180 million of its namesake's money. The only public contribution to the project was a $75 million commitment by the state of Maryland for water, sewer, and transportation improvements on the site. The late Mr. Cooke also built the first privately financed indoor arena in the United States, the Forum in Los Angeles, in 1967. Detroit Tigers owner Mike Ilitch will spend $145 million of his own money to build a new downtown stadium in Detroit, and the sole public contribution to the project is $45 million from the city for new roads and sewers around the site. Ilitch had originally proposed that the government play a larger role in financing, but a firm stand against public subsidy by local officials and the state legislature changed his mind.

SEVERAL OF THE SUPPOSED "SUCCESSES" IN PUBLICLY-FUNDED SPORTS STADIUMS ARE ACTUALLY NOW IN DIRE STRAIGHTS.

• One promising private financing concept that has not been explored is the formation of a private stadium corporation to raise construction funds. Instead of conscripting taxpayers to pay for a project, regardless of their interest in professional sports, small-scale community financing would allow those locals who believe they would benefit from a stadium's construction to assume the investment risks directly. Shares could be priced at a level accessible to small investors, and then be freely bought and sold on the market. The Green Bay Packers have been community owned in a manner something like this for over 60 years. This method should be tried for building stadiums as well.

While many cities and teams have done quite nicely without coughing up taxpayer funds for stadiums, several of the supposed "successes" built with public funds are in dire straits. The much-hyped Cleveland Gateway Complex, which includes the baseball Indians' Jacobs Field and the basketball Cavaliers' Gund Arena, is just a "long fly ball" away from bankruptcy. Cost overruns, combined with inaccurate tax and operating revenue estimates, have pushed the Gateway Economic Development Corporation, which built and operates the facilities, into a precarious financial position. While the tenant teams have prospered as the direct result of generous government support, local taxpayers have been left with staggering bills—perhaps totaling as much as $1 billion—and threats of legal action from the firms that built the complex without being paid in timely fashion.

As the Cleveland Indians prepared to host the third game of the 1995 World Series, 22 contractors seeking payment of an overdue $21.5 million in construction costs actually threatened to foreclose on Jacobs Field. Meanwhile, as the city begins construction of a new football stadium for the Browns, its bankrupt, state-controlled school district has all but eliminated funding for interscholastic sports, and local companies like National City Bank have found they have to run all city high school graduates through a supplemental curriculum to make them employable.

If local sports boosters spent their time, energy, and money on entrepreneurial financing and management efforts, instead of campaigns to extract contributions from already heavily taxed citizens, perhaps professional sports teams could begin to produce real economic benefits. But the stadium blackmailers don't want Americans to know that private funding is a better option.

Professional sports teams are private businesses like any other. They should be responsible for building their own facilities, with government restricting its activities to the provision of legitimate infrastructure. Free-market discipline and initiative—coupled with a little backbone on the part of elected officials—are the keys to ending stadium extortion before it contributes its bit to the bankrupting of American cities.

Grant Gulibon is assistant research director at the Allegheny Institute for Public Policy in Pittsburgh.

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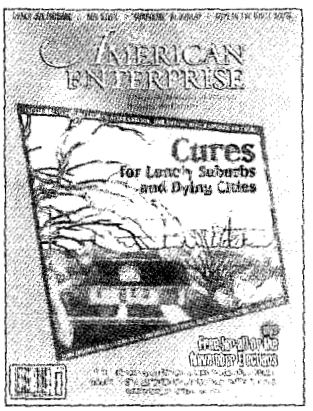

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Flashback

TO KNOW NOTHING OF WHAT HAPPENED BEFORE YOU WERE BORN IS TO REMAIN EVER A CHILD—*Cicero*

My Favorite Martian

If NASA's ho-hum display of rocks and alleged microbes from Mars was intended to galvanize support for the space program, the spacocrats miscalculated. They ought to have learned from the blue-blood astronomer Percival Lowell, who a century ago fired imaginations with his peremptory claim that "we may consider as certain" that "Mars is inhabited by beings."

Mars, in Lowell's telling, was populated by a race of superior, if thirsty, engineers. And Lowell, like NASA, put his Martians to political use.

Percival Lowell was born in 1855 to the Boston Brahminate. Brother A. Lawrence was president of Harvard; sister Amy was the poet. Percival's early life was a whir of French boarding school and independent study in the Orient—constant travel of the sort that unhinges a man. Indeed, Lowell suffered bouts of neurasthenia, that chronic fatigue syndrome of the aristocracy.

In 1877, Italian astronomer Giovanni Schiaparelli had seen "canali," or channels, on Mars. These eerie canals became Lowell's magnificent obsession. He led an observing expedition in the Southwest during the great Mars opposition of 1894; so impressed was he by the "steady air" of Arizona that he built Lowell Observatory near Flagstaff.

With his 24-inch refractor, Lowell saw Schiaparelli's canali—and more. He saw "the turning of the leaf under autumnal frosts." Conceding that "in observations of minute detail, the psychic element insensibly creeps in," Percival produced meticulous sketches of a cobwebbed Mars. The lines exhibited a "hopeless lack of happy irregularity"; their "uniform nature" permitted Lowell to declare, in his blockbuster *Mars* (1895) and the lyrical sequel *Mars and Its Canals* (1906), that "beyond reasonable doubt" Mars is inhabited at "the present moment by some form of local intelligence."

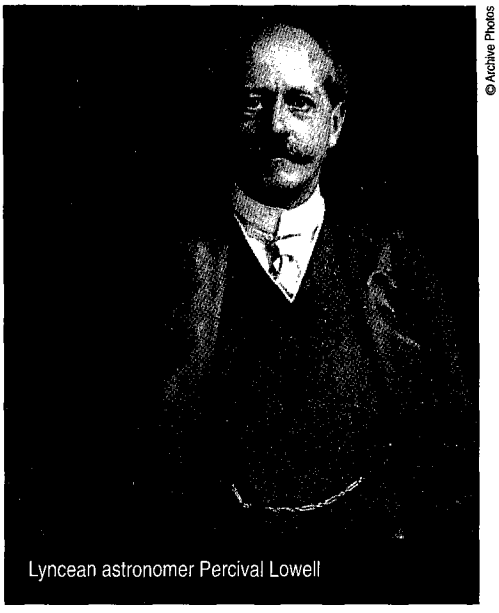
If these be microbes, they were microbes with civil-engineering degrees. For Lowell conjectured that the Martian water supply was diminishing, and so Martians had constructed a planet-wide network of irrigation canals. This, he told his readers, may be "the most startling discovery of modern times."

"Not everybody can see these delicate features at first sight," admitted the lyncean Lowell. In fact, few *astronomers* not on Percival's payroll could see them. But through his fantastic telescope he saw a "cosmopolitan" planet. "Girdling their globe and stretching from pole to pole, the Martian canal system not only embraces their whole world, but is an organized entity." This "continuity of construction" was a lesson for parochial earthlings: Thanks to the red planet's water shortage, "arctic and equatorial peoples are at one.... Isolated communities cannot be therefore sufficient unto themselves; they must combine to solidarity or perish."

Martians had a sense of the "common good." Indeed, "party politics" had been banished. Lowell marveled at "the necessarily intelligent and non-bellicose character of the community which could thus act as a unit throughout its globe." If only tribal earthlings could emulate our pacific and universalist canal-building neighbors! "Interdependence, not independence," was the creed that saved Mars.

Of course Lowell met scoffers, hidebound Earth exceptionalists. But then "conservativism sounds finely, and covers any amount of ignorance and fear."

Though he was a popular lecturer and lovable eccentric, Lowell and his observatory became astronomical outcasts. To "gain more respectability for his theories about Mars," according to one admirer, the astronomer dedicated his observatory to the detection of "planets not yet known." He exhorted his Arizona staff to find Planet X: "Don't hesitate to startle me with a telegram 'FOUND.'"



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Lyncean astronomer Percival Lowell

Lowell's batty benevolence bore fruit, though too late for him to enjoy. In 1930, 14 years after his death, Planet X was discovered by a diligent Kansas farmboy named Clyde Tombaugh, whose father had counseled him, before the son boarded the train to Flagstaff, "Clyde, make yourself useful, and beware of easy women."

Tombaugh and his colleagues named the new planet Pluto—the first two letters of which form Percival Lowell's initials. And somewhere, we may be sure, Percival is squinting at the distant Plutonian shore, discerning the outlines of a harmonious world.

—Bill Kauffman

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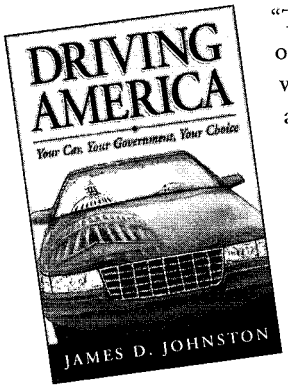

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James D. Johnston is a resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, a former vice president for industry-government relations of General Motors, a former special assistant to the president of the Automobile Manufacturers Association, and a former foreign service officer with the U.S. Department of State.

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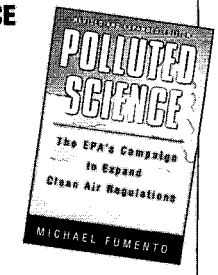

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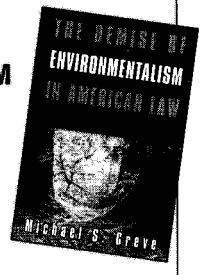

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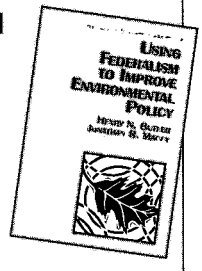

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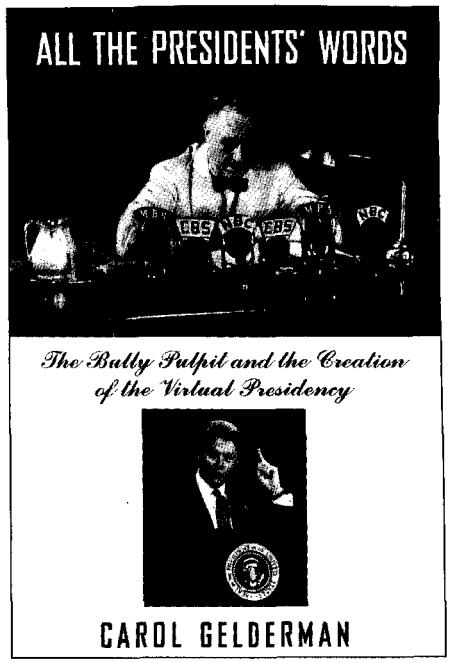

ALL THE PRESIDENTS' VENTRILOQUISTS

By Theodore Pappas

All the Presidents' Words: The Bully Pulpit and the Creation of the Virtual Presidency
By Carol Gelderman
Walker & Company, 221 pages, $23

When Woodrow Wilson delivered a speech before Congress on April 8, 1913, thus breaking the 113-year tradition in which every president since Thomas Jefferson had honored the separation of powers by refusing to appear on Capitol Hill, Senator John Sharp Williams of Mississippi snapped, "A speech from the throne...a cheap and tawdry imitation of the pomposities and cavalcadings of monarchical countries." But Wilson—that notorious cold fish of whom William Allen White remarked, "when he tried to be pleasant he creaked"—was unmoved by such criticism. All that mattered to him was that in stealing the limelight in this novel fashion he had one-upped the master of the bully pulpit, Theodore Roosevelt. "I put one over on Teddy," boasted Wilson to his wife.

To Carol Gelderman, a professor of English at the University of New Orleans, Theodore Roosevelt's speechifying and Woodrow Wilson's grandstanding contributed to the shift in federal power from Congress to the president and paved the way for the "virtual presidency"—where molding and tracking public opinion has become the chief business of the executive branch.

Critical to this development has been the presidential speechwriter, whose full-time presence in the White House began with the election of Franklin Roosevelt. Roosevelt chose his speechwriters from among his personal aides, and by taking an active role in the speechwriting process he was able to ensure continuity between his policies and his public rhetoric. Presidents Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson all followed Roosevelt's example and chose their wordsmiths from among their top advisers.

This tradition ended, writes Gelderman, with Richard Nixon, who took image-making and spin control to new heights, transforming the executive branch into a giant P.R. firm. Nixon created an Office of Communications, an Office of Public Liaison, and a Writing and Research Department composed of 50 writers who "saw themselves as members of a service department rather than a locus for policymaking. This, notes Gelderman, "galled them."

The author's point is that problems can arise from this bifurcated approach to the speechwriting process, which continued under presidents Ford, Carter, Reagan, Bush, and (during his first term) Clinton. For example, after President Ford announced in a commencement address at Ohio State University a new education program that would provide grants for state and local initiatives, the White House phone began ringing off the hook. But no such program existed. One of the president's anonymous wordsmiths had simply made up the idea.

Some of Gelderman's other examples are far less clearcut. She cites, for instance, Reagan's premature announcement of the SDI missile defense initiative. But Reagan pushed on with SDI over the objections of his foreign-policy team quite intentionally, because he saw it as good politics.

Reagan and Roosevelt approached the speech-writing process in diametrically opposed ways, but it did not matter in the end. Reagan may have been the "great communicator," but not for nothing did FDR brag that he and Orson Welles were the best actors in the country.

To Gelderman, Reagan's hands-off style of management is a dangerous sign of the "virtual presidency," whereas Wilson, FDR, and Bill Clinton govern as wise collaborators. This political partisanship taints Gelderman's analysis from beginning to end. From the author's perspective, Roosevelt's rhetorical trick of clothing "the unorthodox in the garb of the familiar" was not done to emasculate congressional powers, establish a welfare state, drag the people into war, or subvert the Constitution in the only way possible at that time. Rather, FDR acted merely and benignly to "banish fear and rally the nation." Regarding Bill Clinton, Gelderman believes that by "remaking his rhetoric" with "a better speech-writing operation" during his reelection campaign he was able to make "the kind of speeches that let him be presidential"—by which Gelderman means acting to shape issues "not in terms of programs or details but in terms of inspiration and moral imperatives."

It is fitting that Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., has promoted this book, for what Gelderman never questions is the virtue of the imperial presidency. Her chief con-

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cern is not to return the executive branch to its limited constitutional moorings but to trim, tuck, streamline, and reform the presidency so that when it squanders our money and starts unjust wars it does so in the most efficient, effective, and rhetorically consistent manner possible. A despot with panache—now that's progress.

Theodore Pappas is the managing editor of Chronicles: A Magazine of American Culture.

FRIEDRICH AND AYN'S KIDS

By Aaron Steelman

Bringing the Market Back In: The Political Revitalization of Market Liberalism
By John L. Kelley
NYU Press, 270 pages, $45

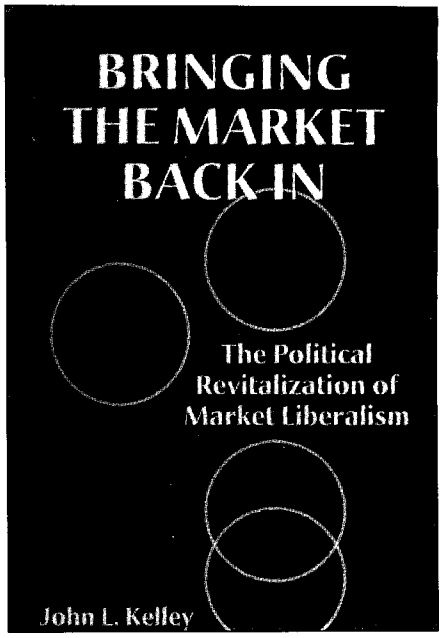
Intellectual histories of left-wing movements are commonplace; hundreds of books have been written on the various Marxian sects. Rare, however, is a serious treatment of individualist thought and activism. For more than two decades, George Nash's *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America Since 1945* was virtually the lone sourcebook on the ideas and personalities of the modern right. Happily, John L. Kelley's *Bringing the Market Back In: The Political Revitalization of Market Liberalism* now helps fill this gaping void. Not only does Kelley update Nash's work, he also provides a much more focused and detailed portrait of one branch of free-market activism: the libertarian—or, as he puts it, "market-liberal"—movement.

Kelley begins his account in the early postwar years, when only a few free-market thinkers—notably, economists Ludwig von Mises, F. A. Hayek, and Henry Hazlitt—were spreading the libertarian gospel. While their ideas had little impact on the government policies of their day, Kelley shows they influenced thousands of acolytes over the decades that followed. By the 1970s, when liberalism's claims of being able to fine-tune the economy through Keynesian fiscal policy and to check communist expansion with a foreign policy of graduated force were crashing to the ground amid stagflation at home and the slaughter of young Americans in Vietnam, the libertarian movement had grown significantly stronger. Classical liberals had secured academic positions around the country and many had entered the world of political activism.

Indeed, while traditionalist conservatives continued to have only marginal influence in the academy, a number of libertarian economists and political theorists saw their ideas gain prominent respectability. Hayek and Milton Friedman both won the Nobel Prize in economics (as did a half-dozen other classical liberals in the following 20 years), Robert Nozick received the 1975 National Book Award for *Anarchy, State and Utopia*, and James Buchanan and Gordon Tullock changed the way that political scientists look at the democratic process with their work on public-choice theory. For the first time in nearly a century, classical liberals were framing the terms of debate on many university campuses.

At first, it seemed as if libertarian political activists might achieve comparable success. In what is really the meat of his book, Kelley shows how the activist wing of the libertarian movement emerged in the late 1960s and the early 1970s. In the process he presents lively portraits of figures like Ayn Rand and Murray Rothbard. Rand singlehandedly attracted thousands to the ideas of liberty through her massive novel *Atlas Shrugged*. Although many have been puzzled by her popularity, Kelley finds it quite unsurprising. "For most readers," he notes, "it was the first time they had read a moral, as opposed to utilitarian, defense of capitalism. Rand's novel could be viewed as a response to Hayek's 1949 plea for a liberal vision to compete with the socialist vision: 'What we lack is a liberal Utopia, a programme which seems neither a mere defence of things as they are nor a diluted kind of socialism but a truly liberal radicalism.'"

Rand's philosophical radicalism would actually appear tame in comparison to the ideas of Rothbard. While Rothbard essentially lifted Rand's theory of rights, he applied it more rigorously and consistently. He presented the case for the totally free society—that is, for anarcho-capitalism—and revived the anti-militarist arguments of nineteenth-century liberals like William Graham Sumner and Herbert Spencer. After breaking with the *National Review* Right over foreign policy, Rothbard spearheaded a newly independent libertarian movement—which, in the 1970s, was focused around the Libertarian Party.



Kelley's lengthy chapter on the Libertarian Party is a virtuoso performance. Although his writing is not elegant, his enormous research more than makes up for it. He has pored over official party documents, very unofficial personal memoranda, and conducted a fair number of interviews. He maintains that the fundamental divide among activists was not one of radicalism versus incrementalism, as has been commonly argued, but one of professionalism versus amateurism. In an amusing story indicative of the unprofessionalism of many in the movement, Kelley recounts how in New York a Libertarian candidate for governor sought to get permanent ballot status for the party (requiring 50,000 votes) by running a theatrical campaign in which he "challenged his competitors to a game of Monopoly, acclaimed Chester Arthur as a great President, and sent around Central Park a modern-day Lady Godiva, a blonde in a body-stocking mounted on a horse named 'Taxpayer.'"

Even if the professionals had been able to fully guide the movement and avoid

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such embarrassments, however, Kelley maintains that the results would not have been significantly different. Libertarian activists had not been able to make inroads with the public at large in anything like the way libertarian academics had in the academy. The populace had become accustomed to the bloated state, and even liked large parts of it. In 1980 U.S. voters elected a candidate who frequently used anti-statist rhetoric, but they recoiled on those occasions when he actually tried to nudge the nation from the path it had set upon during the New Deal.

Have things changed now? Is the failed Republican Revolution of 1994 just another sign of the inevitability of big government? To Kelley, the answer is yes and no. Classical liberals have changed the terms of the debate. "The burden of proof for an increase of government responsibility," he argues, "now clearly rests with the advocates of expansion." But while the state is not likely to get much bigger, it's also probably not going to get much smaller. It's a pessimistic argument, but one that current libertarian activists need to confront.

Aaron Steelman is a staff writer at the Cato Institute.

THE VILLAGE'S VOICE

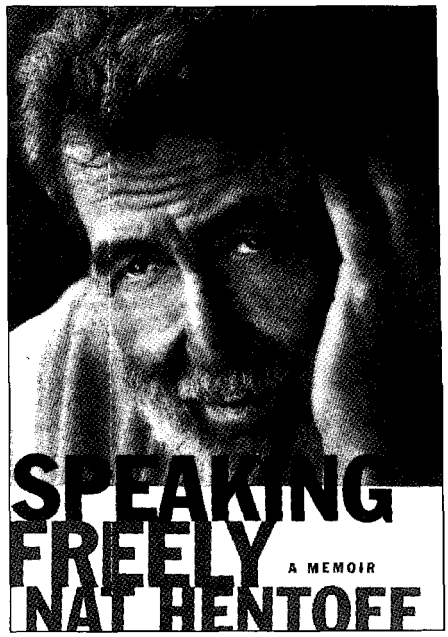
By Nicholas Stix

Speaking Freely: A Memoir
By Nat Hentoff
Knopf, 303 pages, $25

In writing his memoirs, a journalist has an advantage over a civilian, in having a record of his life. And where Nat Hentoff's notebooks left off, his FBI files provided items he'd forgotten, such as the name of the haberdashery where, at age 11, he'd had his first job, and some which he'd never known, such as his parents' Russian birthplaces.

A *Village Voice* and *Washington Post* columnist, and the author of some 40 non-fiction and fiction books for adults and children, the catholicity of Nat Hentoff's interests and his career of taking gutsy stands have made him an institution in a profession pervaded by mediocrity and conformity.

Hentoff's atheism, his support of trade unions and flag burners, and his quaint faith in school integration that most American blacks no longer believe in make him look like your standard-issue liberal. Yet the same man defended the right of Nazis to march in Skokie,



Illinois, *opposes* abortion, and has fought against a purported "right of privacy" that would allow women to dispose of children born with birth defects. It is no wonder that many of Hentoff's colleagues at the *Village Voice* have stopped speaking to him.

The sequel to Hentoff's 1987 memoir *Boston Boy*, which told of his "exuberantly anti-Semitic hometown," *Speaking*

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By George Hunka

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By Philip Wylie
Originally published in 1942; published in a revised edition by Dalkey Archive Press, 1996

The jeremiad is a peculiar genre of American literature, but its examples are legion. The fire-and-brimstone rhetoric of moralism was first transported to our land by the Puritans, and in 1741's *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God* , American theologian Jonathan Edwards epitomized the form. Later the genre was secularized through the examples of Thoreau and Twain.

The Dalkey Archive has done a service to the canon by republishing Philip Wylie's *Generation of Vipers*. Wylie, an early *New Yorker* contributor and coauthor of the science-fiction classic *When Worlds Collide*, issued his denunciation of contemporary America in 1942. The book met with considerable controversy then, and upon its reissue in 1955. The book is shot through with references to World War II, which may seem to marginalize it as a period piece. Lurking beneath the concerns of its moment, though, lie more timeless dilemmas.

Wylie's target is not immorality, as in the traditional jeremiad, but rather ignorance. "Ignorance is not bliss—it is oblivion," he writes. "Determined ignorance is the hastiest kind of oblivion." He examines American ignorance through three "specimens": Attitudes toward sexuality, patterns of education, and the Cinderella story as an American myth.

Much of what Wylie offers is prophetic. On sex he posits, with the example of the 1920s and 1930s behind him, that relying on contraceptives and medical technology to cope with the facts of pregnancy and disease will bring failure. Despite the growing availability of prophylactics in his day, "Disease is still spreading and females are still being unwillingly impregnated." He goes on to offer a vision prescient of the 1960s sexual revolution when he writes that "there is to be no *ipso facto* emancipation of mankind in his new-found freedom from unwanted sex burdens, but only another opportunity for him

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Freely briskly covers his 50-plus years in journalism with a wry, self-deprecating humor that his columns and First Amendment books often lack.

Hentoff enjoyed early success writing on jazz for *Down Beat* magazine, whose New York office he ran. In 1956, he got fired. It seems he had fired a "black" secretary without getting permission from the home office in Chicago. The magazine, which was devoted to black music, had never hired a black staffer. Ironically, Hentoff reports, "Several years later I found out that the secretary at issue was not black, but Egyptian. Of course, these days, the creators and practitioners of Afrocentricity would rule that, being Egyptian, the new secretary was, of course, black. Either way, I would still have been fired."

Hentoff sketches several poignant portraits of jazz greats. He tells of a 1980s concert at Lincoln Park in Dizzy Gillespie's honor. "I hadn't seen Dizzy...for a few years.... In the hallway, Dizzy was talking with someone, saw me, ran over, and grabbed me in a bear hug. To the man he was talking to, Dizzy, grinning, explained, 'It's like seeing an old broad you used to go with.'" Hentoff comments that "This old broad has seldom been so honored."

Hentoff tells sadly of the deterioration of New York's *Village Voice*, once as vividly unpredictable as it is now a museum of political correctness, and of his hopes for its reinvigoration under its current editor-in-chief, Don Frost. For the past several years, I have found Hentoff to be the sole reason for reading the *Voice*.

Hentoff's turn against abortion quarantined him at the virulently pro-abortion *Voice*. He has subsequently campaigned against all forms of euthanasia. He also attacked the practice of testing pregnant women for HIV for research purposes and then withholding the test results from them—a policy demanded by the AIDS lobby, employing an obscene interpretation of "privacy" rights, which condemned thousands of children and their mothers to terrible, premature deaths. Hentoff compared this practice to the "Tuskegee experiments," in which black men infected with syphilis were left untreated, to die horrible, slow deaths. The ACLU's support of this HIV testing policy led Hentoff to resign from the organization in 1995, after 35 years as a member.

In the "Genghis Khan of the Catholic Church," conservative archbishop John Cardinal O'Connor, Hentoff sees a kindred spirit. He and O'Connor locked horns over Pope John Paul II's granting of an audience to Kurt Waldheim after his complicity in Nazi war crimes had been exposed. Before Hentoff could complete a second column attacking the Pope and O'Connor, a letter from the latter shut him up: "Now that I have won the argument, let us proceed. You may recall how Belloc ends his *Path to Rome*: 'So let us love another and love. Time passes and we shall soon laugh no longer. Meanwhile, earnest men are at siege upon us all round. So let us laugh and suffer absurdities, for that is only to suffer one another.'"

The defense of an opponent's freedom of belief requires a kind of love, and the embrace of absurdities. In Hentoff's case, the loving and the embracing are done by a warrior journalist.

Nicholas Stix writes from Brooklyn.

to use his head, and a fresh, fancy chance for him to make a botch of things if he doesn't."

In another of his "specimens" Wylie castigates an educational system that produces a "literate" nation where "not a million adults in America today...could comprehend even this casual treatise." He recommends that schools "divide pupils by aptitude rather than by age," and that they "insist on grammatical precision from the start, and see to it that errors in grammar and in usage, as well as vocabulary failures," bring "punitive deprivations. Rewards should not be made. To reward a child for the performance of a duty is to corrupt it. Life holds no such rewards." Wylie anticipates the "back-to-basics" movement by damning those educators who value self-expression over grammar-book literacy.

On the subject of American women, Wylie writes that the Cinderella legend is even "nearer the heart of modern society than Christianity or science." Its effect may be found "in escape. Unable to achieve any semblance of the legend in reality, women pursue it in fancy.... A woman on the grubby floor of a three-room Oklahoma shanty can...by means of projecting herself, enjoy vicariously the whole experience of Cinderella even though she is literally in the exact spot where Cinderella's story commenced and will never get away from that spot." Amidst today's national hysteria over the death of a distant princess, readers may not want to dismiss this as pre-feminist hogwash.

To characterize *Generation of Vipers* as a conservative or liberal argument is impossible. Wylie's vitriol spews upon businessmen and reformers, politicians and electorate alike.

And his final prescription for the body politic comes from an unlikely source. In his penultimate chapter "The Man on the Cross," Wylie argues for "inner honesty" that was the lesson of Christ: "No man, according to Christ, could know himself unless he knew all the negative and inferior aspects of himself.... A man, Christ also said, who did not know himself could not in any way trust what he thought about other men or the world."

There is no small amount of claptrap in *Generation of Vipers*. The author occasionally falls into the unfortunate use of Jungian argle-bargle (he underwent analysis himself). But Wylie's insistence upon discipline and self-knowledge remains valid, and, in this witty and castigating volume, even entertaining. The spirit of the Rev. Edwards lives on.

George Hunka lives in upstate New York.

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EDITED BY MARTIN MORSE WOOSTER

the Digest

SUMMARIES OF IMPORTANT NEW RESEARCH FROM THE NATION'S UNIVERSITIES, THINK TANKS, AND INVESTIGATIVE PUBLICATIONS

POLITICS

Term Limits and the Constitution

Einer Elhauge, "Are Term Limits Undemocratic?" in The University of Chicago Law Review *(Spring 1997), 1111 East 60th Street, Chicago, Illinois 60637.*

In 1995, the Supreme Court ruled states could not impose term limits on members of Congress. But this issue didn't arise in the 1990s, argues Elhauge of the Harvard Law School. It is the continuation of a 200-year-constitutional debate.

Article I of the Constitution imposes few requirements for members of Congress: Representatives must be 25, senators must be 30; representatives must be American citizens for at least seven years, senators for at least nine years, and both must reside in the state they represent. The Framers did not include any other qualifications for fear Congress would become a self-perpetuating oligarchy.

Because the Framers wanted relatively few federal restrictions and were silent on whether states could impose restrictions, the Supreme Court ruled that the Framers did not want states to impose term limits on federal officials. But Elhauge believes the Framers were actually divided over whether states could restrict who could serve.

The Framers were familiar with term limits. James Madison's Virginia Plan, which the Framers rejected, would have limited all members of Congress to one term. In 1814 Jefferson wrote that the issue was "one of the doubtful questions on which honest men may differ." Initially, many states did limit congressional terms. Pennsylvania imposed a one-term limit on its House delegation, but rescinded it when no other state imposed a similar limit. Three states imposed residency requirements, and Virginia permitted only property owners to serve.

Perhaps the primary reason Congress never declared whether term limits were constitutional is that few politicians stayed in Congress for long. In the nineteenth century, Elhauge estimates, between 40 and 50 percent of members did not run for re-election, in part because most members needed other jobs to make a living.

Congressional longevity peaked in 1988, when 98 percent of House incumbents were re-elected, "a rate higher than re-election rates in the old Soviet Union." Between 1988-90, "a federal legislator was as likely to be sent to prison as to lose re-election": five members of Congress went to jail, while six lost re-election bids.

Hoping to diminish the power of incumbency, 24 states imposed term limits between 1990-95, when the Supreme Court voided them. Though federal elections are now more volatile, Elhauge hopes that Congress will overturn the Court's ruling and allow states to decide term lengths for their delegations. "In the name of protecting democracy," he writes, the Court has frustrated "the democratic preferences of those who voted for term limits."

ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS

The Problems of Prosperity

Christopher C. DeMuth, "The New Wealth of Nations," in Commentary *(October 1997), 165 East 56th Street, New York, New York 10022.*

We live in an age of unprecedented wealth, but poverty seems as prevalent as ever. What accounts for this paradox? American Enterprise Institute president DeMuth analyzes economic trends to provide an explanation.

We now live in a time when "the problem of poverty, defined as material scarcity, has been solved." There will always be people who are unable to work, but for the first time in history, any worker in America can earn enough to

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provide the basic necessities of life—food, clothing, and shelter.

Because most people now earn enough to satisfy their needs, many people choose to spend less time working and more time on leisure, religion, family, or charity. Economist Robert Fogel calculates that the average time a male head of household works has fallen from almost 62 hours a week in 1880 to under 34 hours today, while the time men spend each week on non-work activities has risen from under 11 hours in 1880 to nearly 34 hours today. (The proportion of time women spend working has also fallen.) Moreover, many persons currently counted as poor are students or young people whose income will almost inevitably rise as they gain training and experience.

Because so many people choose not to maximize their income, consumption is a better gauge of a country's wealth than income. Government statistics reveal that the poorest 20 percent of Americans spend twice as much per year as they report in income—suggesting that some of the "poor" may make far more than they tell the government.

Competition ensures that many goods once available only to the rich can now be enjoyed by those with more modest incomes. Such once-exclusive pastimes as golf, tennis, and skiing are now popular with the masses. Likewise, airline deregulation makes Caribbean vacations affordable to the middle-class, and cross-country family visits easy. And anyone can send "a few hundred dollars to a good mutual fund and hire the best investment management American finance has to offer."

This rising prosperity, DeMuth argues, makes arguments for the welfare state increasingly antiquated. Why, for example, should income be redistributed in an era as wealthy and productive as ours? Some liberals argue that markets are fine for the wealthy, but that most workers should rely on the government in times of need. "But 'capitalism for the rich, socialism for the poor,'" DeMuth writes, "is a highly unpromising banner for liberals to be marching under in an era in which capitalism has itself become a profound egalitarian force."

True, illegitimacy, crime, illicit drugs, and divorce are problems in America. But they are a consequence of our prosperous age. "The stupendous wealth, technological mastery, and autonomy of modern life," DeMuth concludes, "have freed man not just for worthy, admirable, and self-improving pursuits but also for idleness and unworthy and self-destructive pursuits that are no less a part of his nature."

New Mergers Hindered by Old Methods

Dale Arthur Oesterle, "Method to the Merger Madness," in Regulation *(Spring 1997), Cato Institute, 1000 Massachusetts Avenue N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001.*

Mergers between companies are becoming bigger and more commonplace. In 1996, for example, seven firms spent at least $10 billion acquiring another company, while two corporations spent $20 billion on a merger. The WorldCom/MCI merger now pending would set a record at $37 billion. Oesterle of the University of Colorado argues that merger barriers imposed over a decade ago make today's mergers more difficult than necessary. In the 1980s, many mergers took place because investors believed the target company could be more profitable if drastically transformed. Many of these firms were conglomerates with under-performing divisions unconnected to the firm's core business. When the companies shed those divisions, they became more profitable. Goodyear, for example, resisted a bid from Sir James Goldsmith by selling everything except its tire and rubber businesses, producing a leaner, more productive enterprise.

But the merger-minded "corporate raiders" of the 1980s have largely disappeared. Today's mergers tend to occur when one firm tries to acquire a rival in order to enhance its own core business, as in the WorldCom/MCI deal. Hostile takeovers are far less common. And while investors in the 1980s often bought companies using cash raised by issuing so-called "junk bonds," today's high stock prices encourage firms to take over other companies by issuing stock instead of debt.

Yet in reaction to the 1980s takeovers, the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), state legislatures, and courts have made mergers slower and more costly. The SEC requires bidders to reveal their attempts to take over a target, which gives second and third bidders the chance to top the initial bid. Some states and courts allow target companies "more power to control the timing, pace, and process of negotiations." These restrictions block marginal bidders from attempting takeovers and ensure that well-endowed targets can delay the bidding process long enough so that a potential merger collapses.

These legal restrictions, Oesterle concludes, do not prevent all acquisitions but have "the same effect of sludge on the moving parts of an engine." Should the process of merging become smoother, he adds, "we would have more economic horsepower."

Insurance or Affirmative Action?

Robert F. Detlefsen, "HUDlining": Disparate Impact and Insurance. *Center For Equal Opportunity, 815 Fifteenth Street N.W. #928, Washington, D.C. 20005.*

Inner-city homeowners' insurance usually costs more than suburban insurance for several reasons. City houses, for instance, tend to be older and need more repairs, and inner-city homes are more likely to be burglarized and destroyed by arson.

Housing activists, however, claim that insurers charge inner-city residents more simply because insurers are racists—and the activists seem to have convinced the Department of Housing and Urban Development to crack down on insurers. The result, warns Detlefsen of the Competitive Enterprise Institute: Poor homeowners may find it increasingly hard to obtain adequate insurance.

In 1945, Congress passed the McCarran-Ferguson Act, which declared insurance a matter for regulation by the states. But in 1992, the federal courts began intruding in a case involving American Family Mutual Insurance. In 1995, American Family settled out of court for $14.5 million, which led government lawyers to pursue other large insurers. In 1996, both State Farm and Allstate

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agreed not to use the age of the house or its property value in calculating insurance premiums. And in 1997, Nationwide Insurance settled a Justice Department suit on far harsher terms, agreeing to mandatory advertisements in inner-city newspapers as well as committing over $13 million to subsidize homebuyers in minority neighborhoods through below-market loans and grants to assist with down payments and closing costs.

All this mandatory aid is not free. Insurers pass on the costs in higher premiums for other policyholders. And although insurers can still set rates for inner-city properties through individual inspections, Detlefsen predicts government civil rights lawyers will eventually require insurers to sell policies in minority neighborhoods at below-market rates. This will likely cause insurers to quit selling *any* policies in states where the government forces them to sell unprofitable policies in low-income neighborhoods.

There is no evidence insurers set payments based on race. If inner-city residents want to lower their premiums, Detlefsen writes, they should do what other homeowners do: Band together to fight crime. If people in inner cities lived in safer neighborhoods, they'd be rewarded with lower premiums.

SOCIETY

No Easy Road to Weight Loss

Michael Fumento, The Fat of the Land: The Obesity Epidemic and How Overweight Americans Can Help Themselves. *Viking, 375 Hudson Street, New York, New York 10014.*

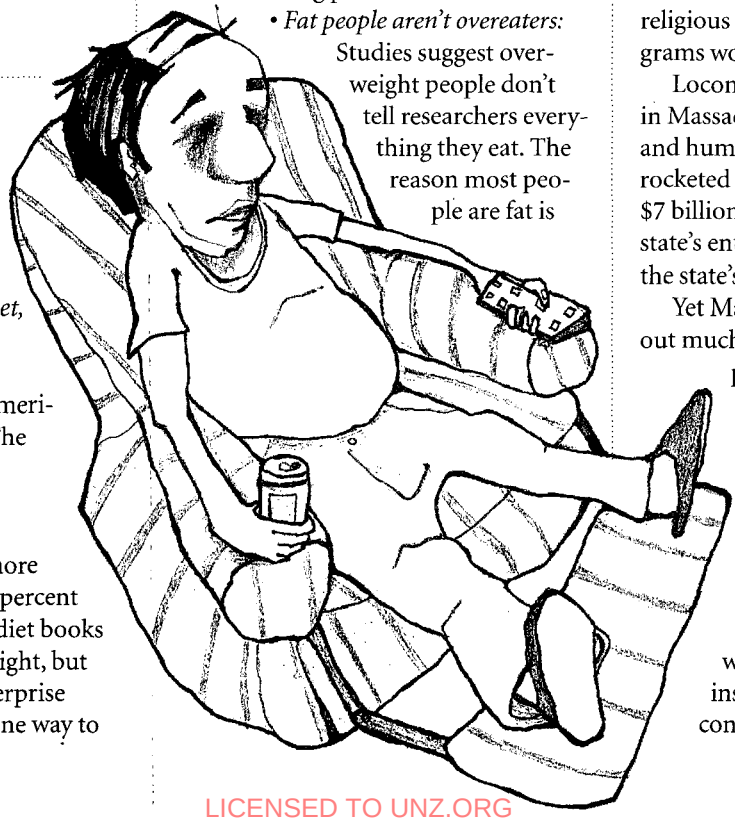
By almost every criterion, Americans are becoming fatter. The American Medical Association reports that while a quarter of Americans in 1980 were obese (weighing at least 20 percent more than they should), by 1994, 35 percent of Americans were. Countless diet books offer "magic bullets" to lose weight, but Fumento of the American Enterprise Institute reports there is only one way to do it: Eat less and exercise more. He also attacks various falsehoods Americans should reject:

• *Cutting fat will lead to losing weight:* Although "low-fat" foods are increasingly popular, most of these low-fat foods are not low-calorie. The Department of Agriculture calculates that Americans have been eating less fat since the 1970s but are still becoming heavier. Europeans eat more fat than Americans but are thinner. It's more important to count calories and eat plenty of fiber than to worry about the amount of fat you eat.

• *A "fat gene" keeps us overweight:* While a fat gene may exist, at most it may cause a body to burn 36 fewer calories a day—"the equivalent of a piece of hard candy, a dollop of mayonnaise, or four minutes on the treadmill." No gene forces fat people to eat Double Whoppers with cheese or to pig out at a smorgasbord.

• *"Setpoint" theory:* There's no evidence the body's metabolism adjusts to prevent people from losing weight past a given point. If bodies had "setpoints" to prevent weight loss, metabolisms would also change to prevent people from becoming fatter. Actually, after steady weight loss, your body's metabolism adjusts to ensure that weight loss continues, particularly if you lose weight slowly over a long period of time.

• *Fat people aren't overeaters:* Studies suggest overweight people don't tell researchers everything they eat. The reason most people are fat is because of gluttony.



Government can do some things to encourage weight loss. The Department of Agriculture could stop selling surplus "junk food" to schools. The Food and Drug Administration could shift from stressing the fat content of foods to encouraging Americans to count calories. Yet the obesity epidemic, Fumento concludes, can't be overcome by government mandates, but only by Americans' ceasing to down quarts of soda, slabs of ribs, and three-scoop sundaes. "If we can put a man on the moon," he writes, "surely we can get him through a doorway without greasing down his sides."

The Seduced Samaritan

Joe Loconte, Seducing the Samaritan: How Government Contracts Are Reshaping Social Services. *Pioneer Institute, 85 Devonshire Street, Boston, Massachusetts 02109.*

We know government welfare programs have limited effectiveness. The solution, some say, is for government to contract out the job to private charities. But Loconte, an editor at the Heritage Foundation, warns that government regulators will bind nonprofit groups in red tape, and that faith-based charities will be hindered from teaching the very religious virtues that help make their programs work where government ones fail.

Loconte examines welfare programs in Massachusetts, a state where the health and human services spending has skyrocketed during the last 25 years, to over $7 billion, accounting for over half the state's entire budget and nearly a third of the state's employees.

Yet Massachusetts already contracts out much of its welfare budget to nonprofits. In the early 1990s, the Social Policy Research Group calculated that 350 nonprofits received 52 percent of their budgets from the state, with an additional 17 percent coming from such federal sources as Medicaid.

But charities pay a high price when they receive tax dollars. For instance, when Catholic Charities converted a two-story house in

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Boston into a mental health clinic, regulators insisted that the federal Americans with Disabilities Act required that an elevator for the second floor be installed, even though the first floor was completely accessible to the handicapped. Why? The charity might someday hire a handicapped person who might want to work on the second floor.

State regulations also ensnare charities. The Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles has proposed that any private school vehicle (such as a minivan) used for "incidental" transportation of students must have all the appurtenances of public school buses, including flashing yellow lights, fire extinguishers, and stop sign arms.

Government-subsidized, faith-based charities find it difficult to teach religion. In Boston, for example, Loconte found little Catholic teaching at the state-subsidized St. Francis House, a homeless shelter. When Loconte asked an official what exactly was Franciscan about the house, the official replied, "We've got pictures of St. Francis all around in every office."

Loconte suggests that instead of direct government funding of organizations, vouchers given directly to the unfortunate and redeemable at public and private institutions might help government to dispense aid without generating red tape. But he urges leaders of nonprofits to think carefully before they accept tax dollars. For without reform, he argues, federal and state regulators "will continue to place costly burdens on agencies or compel them to offer help the government way."

Judaism's War on Poverty

David G. Dalin, "Judaism's War on Poverty," in Policy Review *(September/October 1997), Heritage Foundation, 214 Massachusetts Avenue N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002.*

Jews have long acknowledged an obligation to help the poor. The Bible teaches Jews that they are to practice *tzedekah* (charity) as often as possible. In Deuteronomy, for example, God commands the Israelites "to open thy hand unto the poor and needy."

Today, many liberal Jews fulfill charitable obligations by calling for bigger government welfare budgets. Rabbi Dalin wants Jews to return to their roots. For centuries, he argues, Jews practiced sound policies of self-help that ought to be revived:

• *Loans rather than grants:* In Exodus, God teaches that aid to the poor should be given in the form of interest-free loans. This principle was maintained by Jews for centuries. The rabbis who compiled the Talmud agreed, stating that "he who lends is greater that he who performs charity, and he who puts in capital to form a partnership with the poor is greater than all."

In the nineteenth century, Jews institutionalized this practice of interest-free loans. At the turn of the century, for example, the Hebrew Free Loan Society of New York lent $15 million to 400,000 borrowers over a 30-year period. "We provide the needy with the means to provide for and help themselves," the president of the society said in 1921.

• *Stigmatizing dependency:* According to scholar Alfred Kuznik, the second-century Jews in Roman-controlled Palestine saw Jews who accepted Roman public assistance as apostates. In a 1603 case, the Jewish Council of Padua, Italy, created one of the first "workfare" rules, declaring that aid recipients had to work to receive charity.

• *Self-reliance as the goal:* Until the New Deal, Jews stressed the importance of self-help. Between the 1820s and the Civil War, Jews created scores of charities, including fraternal organizations, orphanages, retirement homes, and such major hospitals as Albert Einstein Medical Center in Philadelphia and Mount Sinai Hospital in New York. At the turn of the century, such great philanthropists as Felix Warburg and Julius Rosenwald gave millions to poor people willing to improve themselves.

After the New Deal, Jews began to advocate government welfare. But "rather than extol increased government spending and social welfare programs," Dalin writes, "American Jews should reaffirm the traditional Jewish religious preference for charitable lending over alms giving."

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Thank Your Local Prison

Charles Murray, Does Prison Work? Sunday Times *of London/Institute of Economic Affairs, 2 Lord North Street, London SW1P 3 LB, England.*

Murray of the American Enterprise Institute suggests that long prison sentences, particularly for crime-prone youth, will ultimately reduce crime rates. "Crime is low," he writes, "when crime doesn't pay."

He examines American crime statistics to prove this. Between 1961 and '68, the number of prisoners in federal prisons fell sharply. By 1971, federal crimes were 64 percent less risky than a decade before. This led crime rates to skyrocket in the 1970s. But since 1980, crime has fallen. The U.S. homicide rate is at its lowest level since 1969, and the burglary rate has dropped 40 percent from its peak.

Murray believes falling crime rates are largely due to stricter punishment. In the 1990s, the federal prison population has increased by about 100,000 every two years. Most of these prisoners would be committing more crimes if they were not in jail. One government study found that 45 percent of state prisoners were serving time for crimes they committed while on probation or parole.

Sending criminals to jail will not blunt the "social forces that produce amoral, unsocialized, unmotivated new generations of low-income youths." Nor will jail teach these crime-prone youths virtue. "If the question is, 'How can we restore the fabric of family life and socialize a new generation of young males to civilized behavior?' then prison is not part of the answer," Murray writes. "If the question is, 'How can we restrain known, convicted criminals from murdering, raping, assaulting, burglarizing, and thieving?' prison is by far the most effective answer short of the death penalty."

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OTHER COUNTRIES

A Shrinking Planet?

Nicholas Eberstadt, "World Population Implosion?" in The Public Interest *(Fall 1997), 1112 16th Street N.W. #530, Washington, D.C. 20036.*

Environmentalists have long warned about a world "population explosion." But American Enterprise Institute fellow Eberstadt suggests that the world's population will actually shrink.

A 1996 U.N. report offers several possible global population trends. The lowest estimate foresees world population peaking in 2040 at 7.7 billion, falling by 85 million from 2040-50, then continuing an "indefinite demographic descent" as world population shrinks by about 25 percent each generation.

The U.N. demographers predict that under this scenario, some countries will continue to grow. Pakistan's population, for instance, would rise from 136 million in 1995 to 306 million in 2050. By contrast, America's population would rise only from 267 million in 1995 to 272 million by 2050.

But Eberstadt urges caution. Life insurance companies are very good at predicting life expectancies, but demographers do a poor job predicting future birth rates. For example, in the 1930s, such experts as British economist John Maynard Keynes predicted a population implosion beginning in the 1950s. He could not foresee either the post-World War II "baby boom" or the subsequent "baby bust." Population implosions, however, are not uncommon events. For example, in the 1960s mothers in Thailand typically bore over six children; by the 1990s, they averaged less than two children. Japanese fertility rates have been steadily falling for the past 40 years.

Shrinking populations could doom "pay-as-you-go" social insurance programs (like Social Security) in countries where the old outnumber the young. The most dramatic effect of falling population will be on the family. What will families be like when children have no siblings or cousins? Robert Frost once wrote that your family "are the people who will take you when no one else will." If the majority of people lack blood relatives, Eberstadt asks, who will care for (or care about) tens of millions of elderly orphans?

Who Will Rule China?

Bruce J. Dickson, "Unsettled Succession: China's Critical Moment," in The National Interest *(Fall 1997), 1112 16th Street N.W. #540, Washington, D.C. 20036.*

Communist China has regularly witnessed battles over succession. The "Cultural Revolution" of the 1960s, the "Gang of Four" drama in the 1970s, and the crushing of the Tiananmen Square revolt in 1989, for example, are partially due to Chinese rulers killing, exiling, or demoting rivals.

When Deng Xiaopeng died last February, however, there were no revolts or demonstrations, prompting some to believe that the problem of succession was finally solved. But George Washington University's Dickson suggests the succession problem will plague China as long as it remains Communist.

Unlike previous rulers, Deng Xiaopeng had already appointed successors. He named Jiang Zemin head of state, leader of the army, and head of the Chinese Communist Party; Li Peng Prime Minister; and former spymaster Qiao Shi head of the National People's Congress. Since there were no vacancies after Deng's death, no prizes remained for anyone who wanted to launch a *coup d'état.* The Chinese army also repressed anyone who attempted a demonstration.

China's current rulers, unlike previous generations, largely agree on the amount of *gaige* (reform) and *kaifang* (opening to the outside world) that will take place. They allow a certain amount of economic freedom but suppress threats to Communism. Not many Chinese rulers want to return to strict Maoism, but the few sympathetic to democracy (such as Minister of Electronics Hu Qili and Vice Minister of Civil Affairs Yan Mingfu) are in relatively minor posts.

Dickson predicts four possibilities for China's future: the current era of stability continues, with Jiang Zemin and his allies retaining command; warlordism comparable to the 1920s and 1930s breaks out; democracy arises; or Mao-style totalitarianism returns. But Dickson contends that whatever happens, the end of China's Communist era will likely occur "suddenly and dramatically, not gradually and incrementally."

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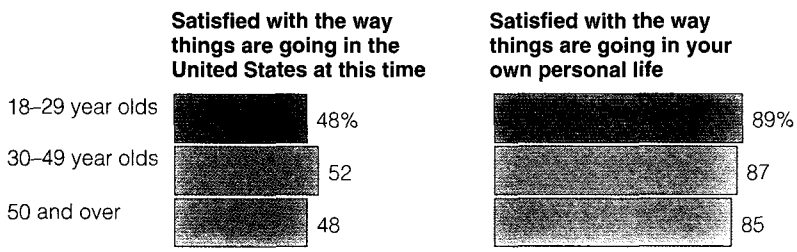
Opinion Pulse

EDITED BY KARLYN BOWMAN

THE BELIEFS OF GENERATION X

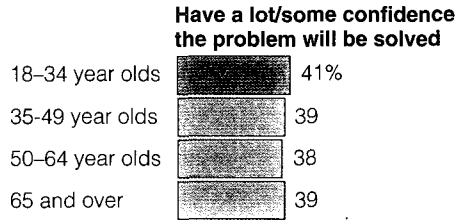
The impression of Gen Xers as sullen slackers isn't borne out by survey data. Young people today are just about as satisfied with the way things are going as older Americans. They share their elders' views about the federal government's performance and about obligations of citizenship such as volunteering or reporting a crime. Because they are just starting out at work and generally at the low end of the pay scale, they are, unsurprisingly, a little less satisfied with the work they are doing than those who are older.

Question: **In general, are you...**



Source: Surveys by the Gallup Organization, August 22–25, 1997 (left) and March 10, 1996 (right).

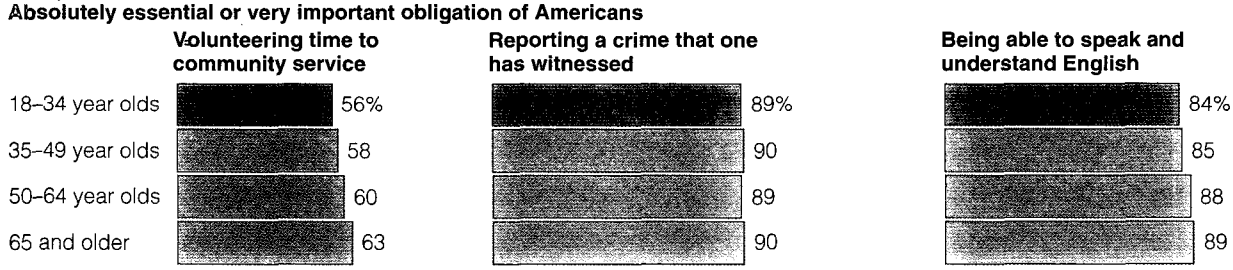
Question: **When the government in Washington decides to solve a problem...**



Source: Survey by the Gallup Organization for the Post-Modernity Project of the University of Virginia, January–April, 1996.

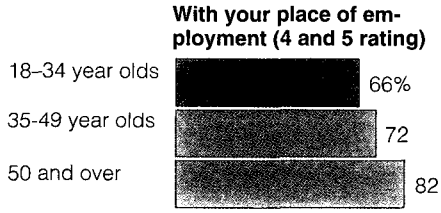
Question: **We all know that Americans have certain rights, such as the right to free speech and to a free public education. Now I'd like you to consider what obligations or responsibilities, if any, we have towards others. For each of the following, do you feel...?**

Absolutely essential or very important obligation of Americans

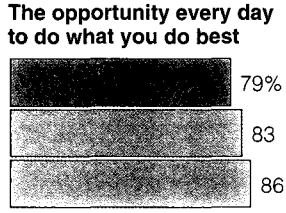


Source: Survey by the Gallup Organization for the Post-Modernity Project of the University of Virginia, January–April, 1996.

Question: **On a 5-point scale, where 1 is extremely dissatisfied and 5 is extremely satisfied, how satisfied are you...?**

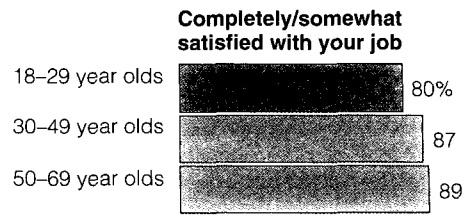


Question: **At work, do you have...?**



Source: Survey by the Gallup Organization for *Inc.*, January 1997.

Question: **How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your job? Would you say you are...?**



Source: Survey by the Gallup Organization, August 22–25, 1997.

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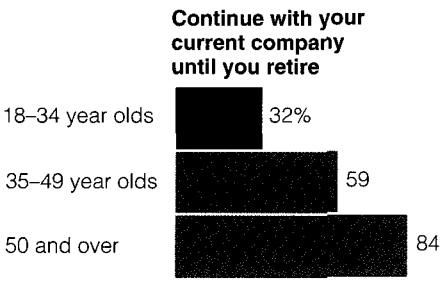
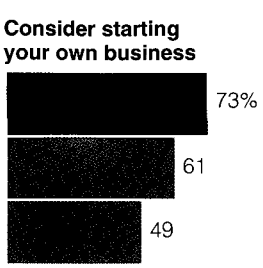
Gen X on Work and Politics

While Gen X members may be a little less satisfied with their current jobs than other age groups, they foresee changes ahead. Far from shunning work, they are enthusiastic about entrepreneurial pursuits. Over 60 percent say they could become rich. A near majority of Gen Xers, 46 percent, call themselves political independents. As is common with the young, they are slightly more likely to say they are liberal than conservative, and progressive than traditional.

Question: **Do you believe you will...?**

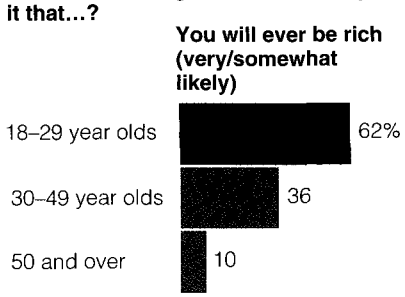


Question: **Would you ever...?**



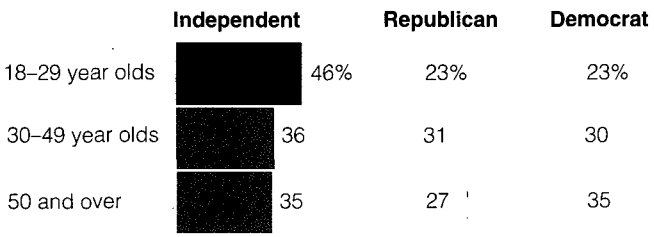
Source: Survey by the Gallup Organization for *Inc.*, January 1997.

Question: **Looking ahead, how likely is it that...?**



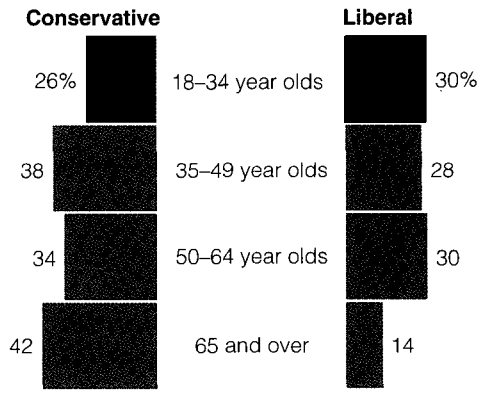
Source: Survey by the Gallup Organization, May 1990.

Question: **In politics, as of today, do you consider yourself...?**

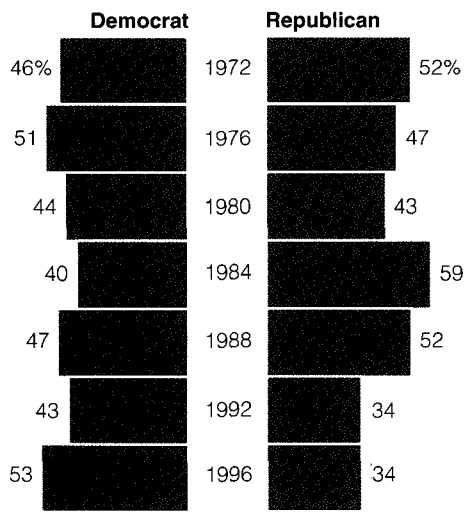


Source: Survey by the Gallup Organization, October 3–5, 1997.

Question: **Which one of the following best describes your overall political beliefs?**

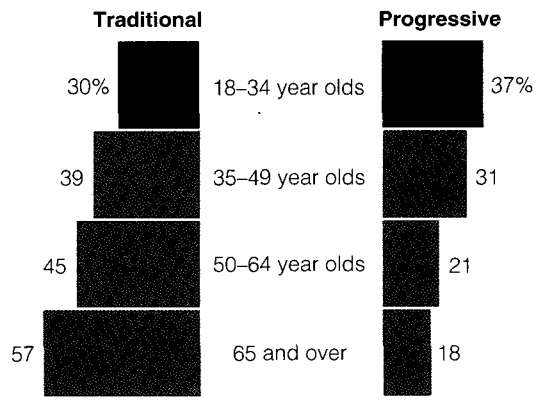


18–29 year olds vote for President



Source: Postelection and national exit polls for the years shown.

Question: **If you were to describe yourself to someone you had never met, how would you describe yourself...?**



Source: Survey by the Gallup Organization for the Post-Modernity Project of the University of Virginia, January–April 1996.

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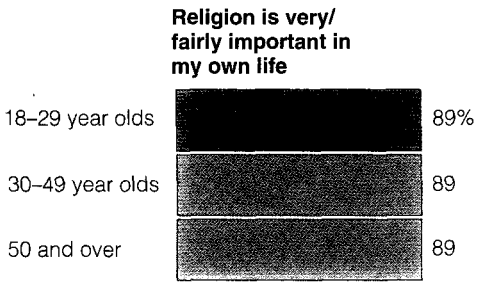
Gen X on the Social Side

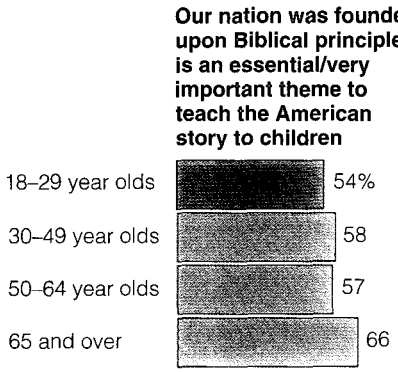
Like their elders, Gen X members say religion is important in their lives. They are less likely to go to church each week, a practice that often comes with age and children. In some important ways this generation is distinct. They are much more likely than other age groups to have had a mother who worked full-time outside the home. Nearly three in ten in the group are products of divorce, a fact that may be influencing their views about its easy availability. Regular newspaper readership is low among Gen Xers, and computer use is higher.

Question: **How important would you say religion is in your own life...?**



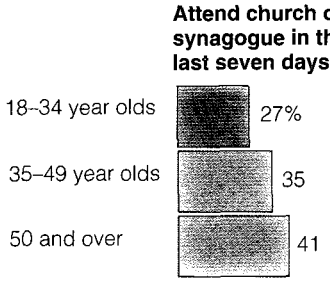
Source: Survey by the Gallup Organization, August 12–13, 1997.

Question: **In teaching the American story to children, how important is the following theme...?**



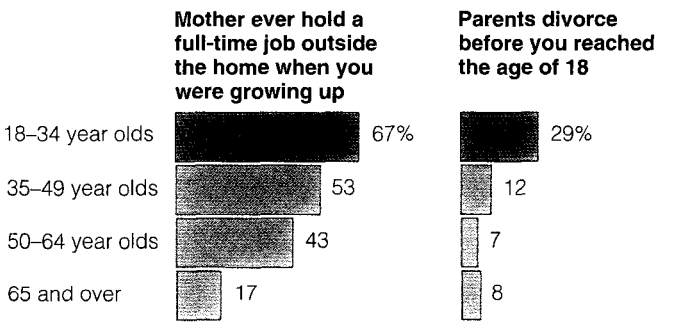
Source: Survey by the Gallup Organization for the Post-Modernity Project of the University of Virginia, January–April, 1996.

Question: **Did you, yourself...?**



Source: Survey by the Gallup Organization, August 12–13, 1997.

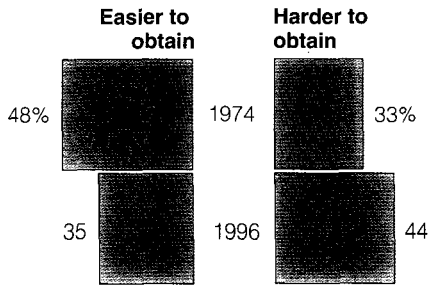
Question: **Did your...?**



Source: Survey by the Gallup Organization for the Post-Modernity Project of the University of Virginia, January–April, 1996.

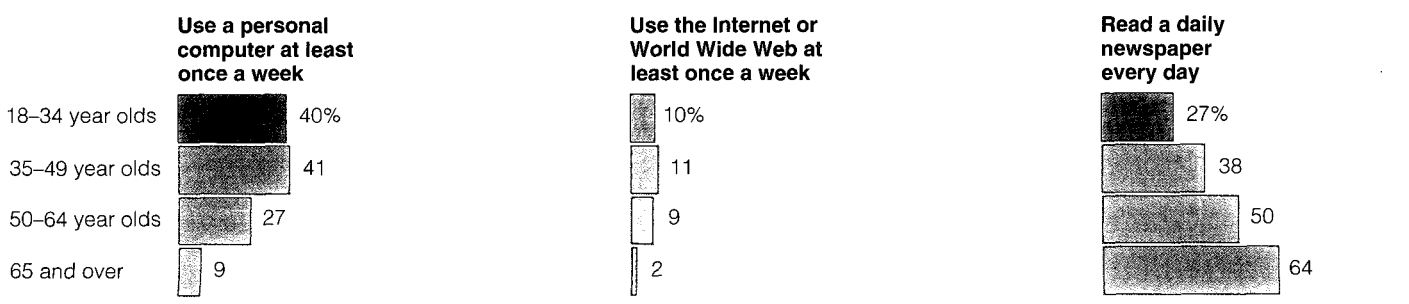
Question: **Should divorce in this country be...?**

18–29 year old's response



Source: Survey by the National Opinion Research Center, latest that of 1996.

Question: **Do you...?**



Source: Survey by the Gallup Organization for the Post-Modernity Project of the University of Virginia, January–April, 1996.

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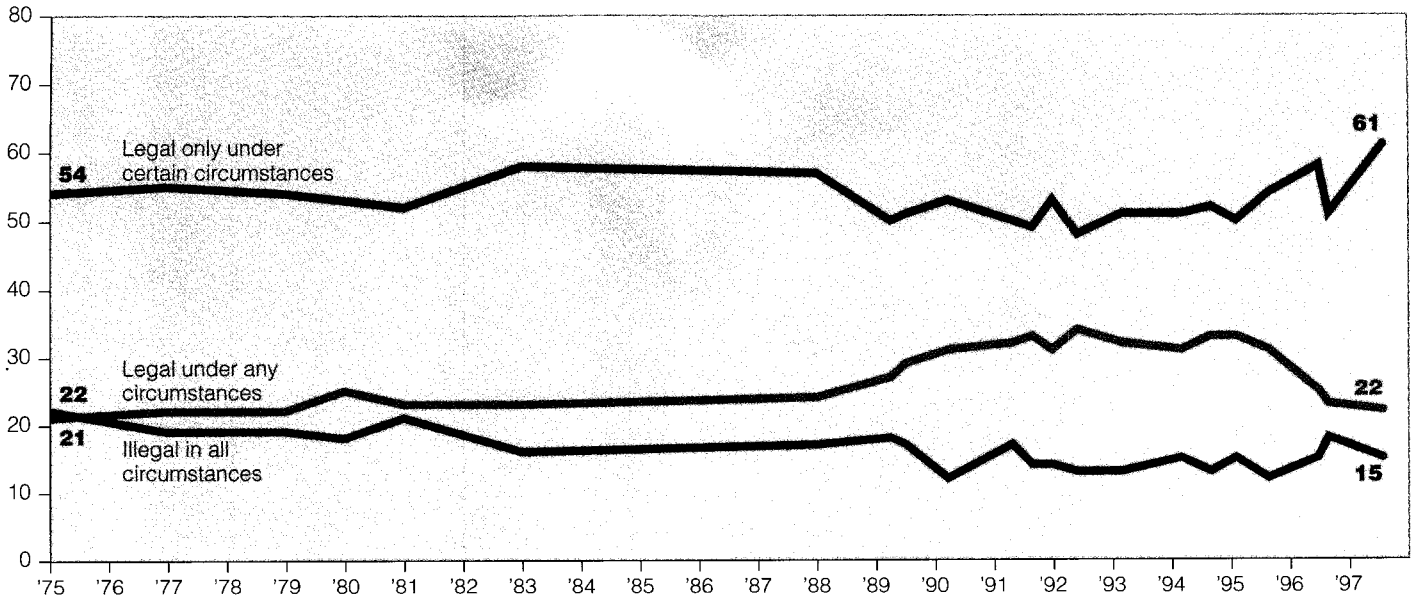
ABORTION: 25 YEARS AFTER ROE v. WADE

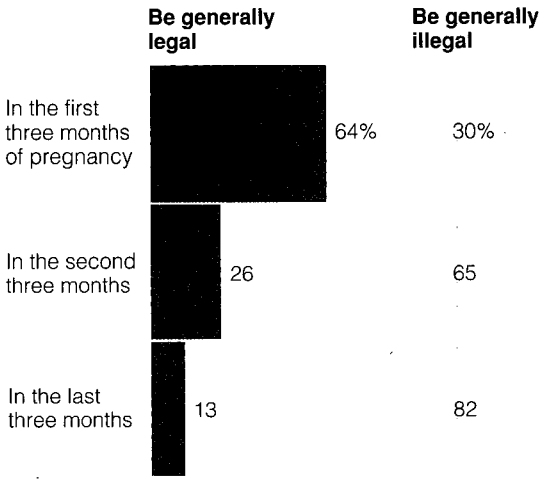
Despite 25 years of contentious debate, general public opinion on abortion is about where it was when *Roe* v. *Wade* was decided in January 1973. Since polls were first taken on abortion, majorities or near majorities have consistently said that abortion should be legal only in certain circumstances. Americans favor laws providing for waiting periods, parental consent, spousal notification, and information about alternatives before the procedure is undertaken.

Question: **Do you think abortion should be legal under any circumstances, legal only under certain circumstances, or illegal in all circumstances?**



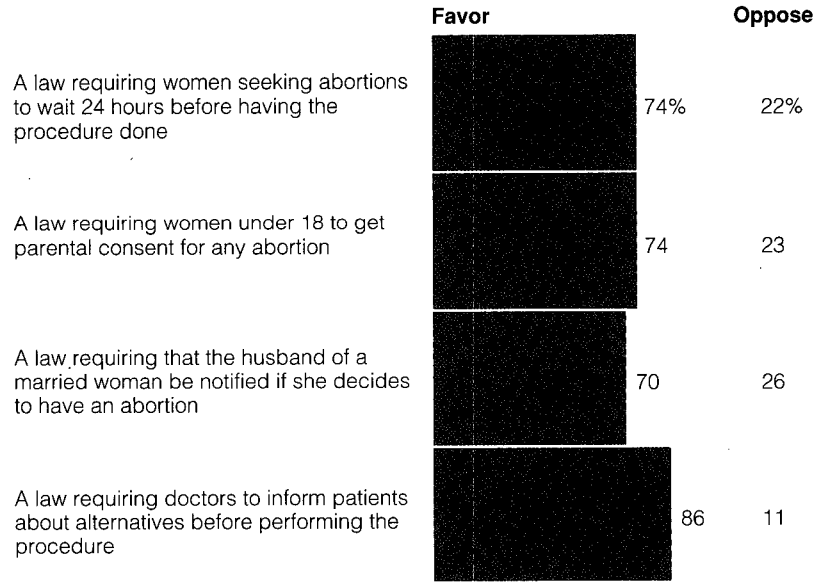
Source: Surveys by the Gallup Organization for CNN/*USA Today*, latest that of August 1997.

Question: **Thinking more generally, do you think abortion should...?**



Source: Survey by the Gallup Organization for CNN/*USA Today*, August 1996.

Question: **Do you favor or oppose...?**



Source: Survey by the Gallup Organization for CNN/*USA Today*, July 1996.

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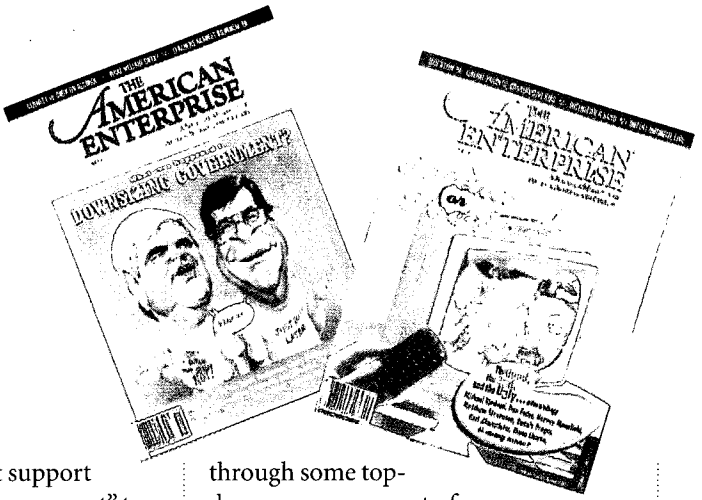
the Mail



Ronald Bailey (ENTERPRISING, May/June) says he saw a "true free-market success story" when he visited the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI). But while gross economic activity numbers are climbing in the CNMI, these apparent indicators of "success" have come at a terrible cost to U.S. citizens on the islands and on the mainland.

CNMI's economy has been supported handsomely by U.S. taxpayers who have invested $1 billion in the islands over the last 20 years. CNMI residents pay no U.S. income taxes. The islands' local immigration policy, meanwhile, has allowed a flood of nearly indentured foreign workers, helping to sextuple the population in the last 27 years, jostling local citizens out of jobs and increasing criminal activity. As a result, the local infrastructure (streets, electric power, water, and sanitation) has been severely challenged.

Success in the CNMI economy has been allocated to the few, not the many, and there is a remarkable flow of funds (remittances and profits) from the CNMI to off-island interests. A sensible set of immigration, minimum-wage, and law enforcement policies, such as those suggested by President Clinton, is long overdue.

Allen P. Stayman
Director, Office of Insular Affairs
U.S. Department of the Interior

I was pleased to see Phil Langdon's fair-minded review of my book *The Reluctant Metropolis* ("California Schemin'," Nov./Dec.). But he criticizes me for being descriptive about metropolitan Los Angeles's current woes, rather than prescriptive about how to solve them. He especially points to my criticism of Proposition 13 and my apparent support for "some institutional arrangement" to govern the region more effectively.

I hope nobody thought from Langdon's review that I had called for a repeal of Prop. 13. My criticism of this initiative is based not on the reduction in overall tax revenue it created—a reduction that has actually led to constructive change—but rather to its unfortunate side effects.

By making the property tax less important to Californian municipalities, Prop. 13 inadvertently made the sales tax more important, thus touching off the "retailing wars" among neighboring cities I describe in my book. And by awarding control over allocation of property tax to the state government, Prop. 13 inadvertently shifted a lot of political power away from localities to Sacramento, where it remains stuck to this day.

These problems can and should be solved by requiring sales-tax sharing among local jurisdictions, and by returning the power to allocate property taxes to local officials. I have publicly said so over the past decade, but nothing has happened because no one seems to care, except "inside-the-beltway" lobbyists in Sacramento who are wedded to the status quo.

As a trained urban planner, I believe that by somehow rearranging political power and political institutions a metropolis like Los Angeles could overcome its incapacity to govern itself effectively. But such changes are unlikely so long as individual citizens lack the political will to undertake them. This attitude is one reason why L.A., like so many other American cities, remains such a "reluctant" metropolis.

Constructive change will come not through some top-down rearrangement of governmental deck chairs, but as the result of more thoughtful and responsible citizenship on the part of the voters. The most powerful agent of change is an active and concerned citizenry armed with useful information about how politics and economics in their communities really work. Rather than presume to know "the answer," I set out to provide this information to citizens of Southern California—indeed, of all metropolises—in an understandable way.

"Draw your own conclusions," Langdon laments. Yes, please do. That's precisely the point.

William Fulton
Ventura, California

Suzy Ryan's article about taking a firm moral stand on abortion was fantastic (IN REAL LIFE, Nov./Dec.). The fact that a five-year-old boy knows that abortion is wrong is proof enough, but the lack of moral courage in our society is pervasive. I have to admit that I also had a period when I lacked moral courage on abortion. At the Fairfax Fair a couple of years back I signed a pro-choice petition but kept thinking to myself that I really didn't believe that. Pro-choice is no choice. Death is not an option. Adoption should be the option. The lack of respect for human life is also pervasive in our society. Witness babies being thrown into dumpsters and the high abortion rate.

Mary DeVito
Sterling, Virginia

I second Karl Zinsmeister's call for true conservative leadership (BIRD'S EYE, Nov./Dec.). It has been too long since we have seen principled politicians who

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value the liberty under law that made America great. He is right: We cannot compete with liberals in the "compassion" category. Nor, I might add, can we pin our hopes on merely delivering clever sound-bites. The time for small government, for the sake of liberty, has come. This message has a much broader appeal than the partisan, I'm-not-one-of-them squabbling and election-year posturing that is driving Americans away from the polls in droves. I had allowed my subscription to lapse, but after reading "Bird's Eye" I am renewing and giving a subscription to my alma mater. Keep raising the standard of clear thinking!

Quena Gonzalez
via CompuServe

Thank you for the September/October issue devoted to "TV: Friend or Foe?" As a baby boomer raised on it from age 4 (1954), I'm glad I didn't have it above my crib and in the earliest years of life. I retain mixed feelings about it now. As an only child, some of my fondest memories are of TV in the '50s and '60s, when it was often my favorite companion.

I still enjoy recounting episodes of Rod Serling's "Twilight Zone" or Sid Caesar's "Your Show of Shows" (my parents occasionally let me stay up late). "The Mickey Mouse Club" was a particular early childhood favorite of, I'm sure, nearly 40 million living Americans. In more recent years, Ken Burns' documentaries, particularly "The Civil War," have been worth watching.

And I agree with Professor Cantor: "The Simpsons" may indeed be the greatest TV cartoon show of all time—but not for my 12-year-old children. These days if my family or I need to watch TV, we'll intrude upon family or friends.

I tried once before to give it up about 20 years ago, but my parents gave me their old set when they felt it needed replacing. Almost 4 years ago, during a thunderstorm with the windows open behind it, the circuitry got wet and it made a funny noise, emitting smoke and a weird odor when I attempted to turn it on. My wife and I looked at each other and explained to the children that we would not replace it.

Sometimes the children and I look back with fond regrets when in a large electronic store with hundreds of TVs all tuned to the same channel, we'll stand transfixed in front of one of them for a few moments, like deer in the headlights—and then jump out of harm's way before becoming mesmerized by its all-too-pervasive allure.

For TV-watching *is* a hypnotic habitual addiction. It's not an easy one to break, even if one is highly motivated. The comparison to nicotine, drug, and alcohol addiction is accurate, yet none of those addictions, as pernicious and health-destroying as they are, affect so many people at precisely the same time or at the same rate as TV does. Very few people are willing to give TV up unless something catastrophic happens to their set—like its destruction.

To paraphrase Karl Marx: TV is the opiate of the masses.

Michael V. Marx
Strasburg, Virginia

It was difficult to suppress audible expressions of approval for your November/December issue. Airing the failures and dangers of big government and pointing out the value of smaller government, unfortunately, is too often a case of the preacher preaching only to the choir. Karl Zinsmeister's BIRD'S EYE message deserves wider distribution and should be offered as a low-cost reprint, available in volume to those that would send it to friends who need to read it more than they.

Safe and effective routes to smaller and more responsive government have long been known to Washington insiders. To quote an officer of Citizens Against Government Waste, "effective solutions are well known to the establishment but too many people benefit from the way things are." In other words, too many in Washington fear disturbing the status quo means political suicide.

Karl Marx and Nikita Khrushchev both predicted the destruction of democracy from within. We are the enemy within. Most of us just don't know it yet.

Wayne G. Skaggs
Wimberley, Texas

Dan Mitchell writes: "To the joy of tax accountants everywhere, the new tax bill adds complexity to the code and creates new loopholes for special interests." ("Republicans Punk Out," Nov./Dec.). I am a tax accountant, but I feel no joy over recent tax legislation, including the 1996 legislation. It is clear to me that the Republican Congress hasn't a clue or a care about the burdensome complexity it imposes on Americans and their professional advisors. I've even heard some disingenuous Republicans gloat that this added complexity is the very reason we need to trust them to replace the current system with a "simpler" tax code. Yeah, sure.

I suspect that Mitchell hasn't done his homework: The frustration of learning new and confusing rules, stress over properly advising clients what to do in this screwed up tax system, and the overtime required to get it all done, do not bring me any joy. If his accountant is joyous about all of this, he needs a new accountant.

James F. Joyner, III, CPA
Spartanburg, South Carolina

I enjoyed your September/October issue, especially Bill Bradford's article on Alan Greenspan and Ayn Rand ("Alan Greenspan—Cultist?"). I wanted to suggest to my son that he look at the Ben Stein essay "No Biz Like Show Biz" in the on-line version of your magazine, but I can't open it.

Jerry L. Jordan
Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland

Editor's note: The TAE website (www.TheAmericanEnterprise.org) provides covers and tables of contents for recent issues, plus the full text of two feature articles in each issue (the Stein article is not one of the two for our September/October issue). It does not supply full text for additional feature articles or any of our regular departments. Nor does it provide any of the art or graphics printed in each issue of the magazine. It's important we not give away so much content for free as to reduce subscriptions and newsstand sales—because paying readers are the financial lifeblood that make this publication possible.

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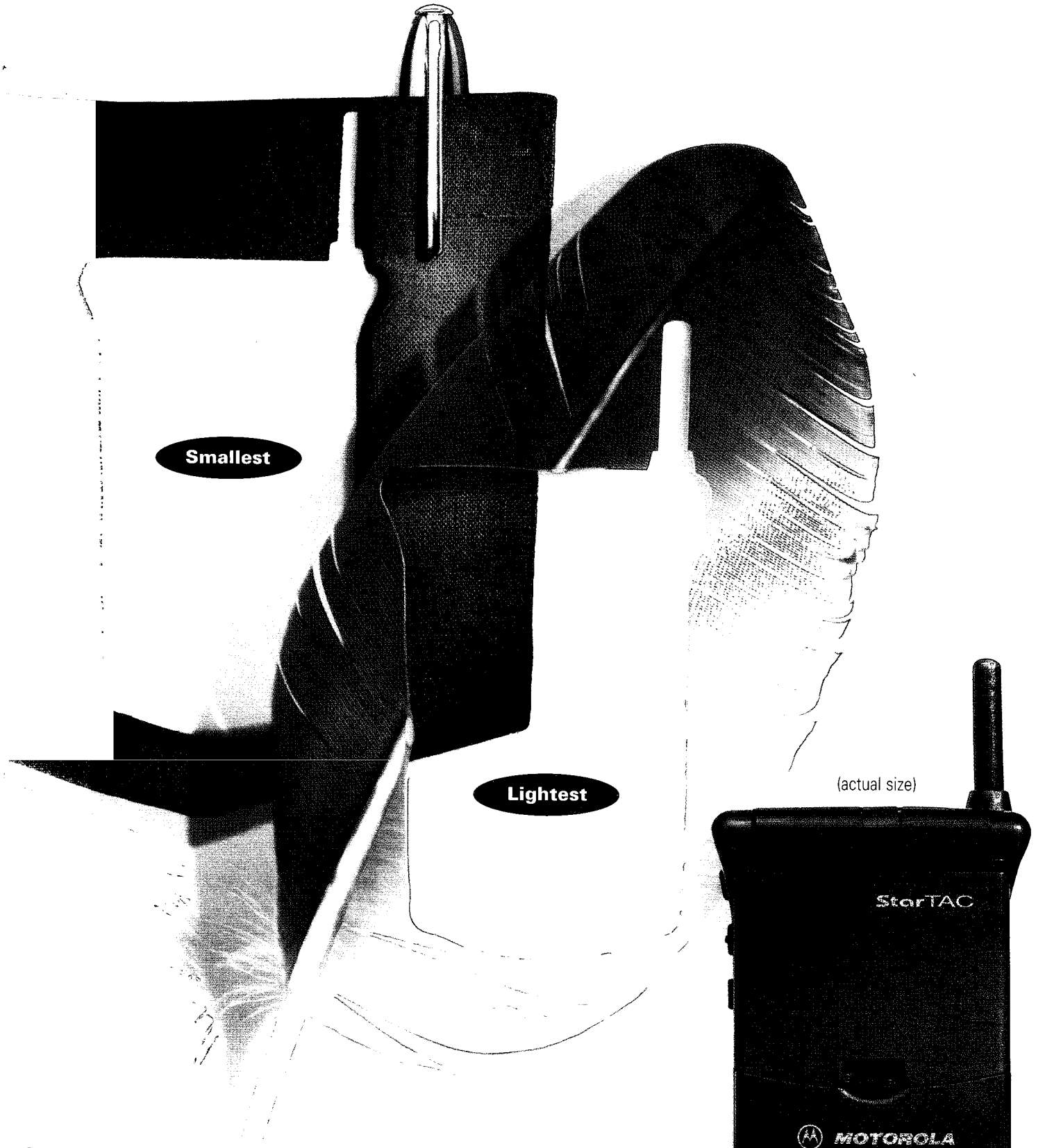

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